



## Thirty billion beneficial insects and mites take care of the quality of fruit and vegetables consumed in Europe

- *Every year in these days the agricultural season starts and some 30 billion beneficial insects and mites (arachnids) are released into the solar greenhouses of Almeria and the coast of Granada to control pests.*
- *This practice, called Biological Control, enhances the quality of fruit and vegetables while promoting biodiversity and environmental sustainability.*
- *Products grown in solar greenhouses in southern Europe supply a market of 500 million people.*

**Brussels, Belgium (23.10.2020)** – Every year in early October, an army of tiny, unnoticeable insects and mites is released by farmers into the solar greenhouses in southern Spain (Almeria and the coast of Granada) where most of Europe's winter horticultural products are grown (peppers, tomatoes, aubergines, cucumbers and courgettes). Its mission: to combat the pests that affect these crops by acting as natural predators and to pollinate the flowers. An integrated fight dubbed the "green revolution", which drastically reduces the use of chemical pesticides, resulting in greater sustainability and respect for the environment. A milestone that marks a fundamental difference with the agricultural techniques used in other areas of Spain and the world.

This "biological warfare" marks the beginning of the agricultural season and this year around 30 billion microscopic insects and mites will be released, occupying 25,000 of the 31,500 hectares of solar greenhouse cultivation in this Mediterranean area. This makes it the largest cultivation area in the world currently using this environmentally friendly technique, beneficial for the health of both, consumers and workers. The result is healthier and more sustainable vegetables, two priorities for buyers especially after the impact of Covid-19. This is corroborated by a study carried out by Capgemini which reveals that 79% of consumers are changing their purchasing preferences based on sustainability standards.

"The use of biological pest control has increased and evolved in southern European solar greenhouses. It is in fact an effective tool towards sustainable production systems, positively influencing the quality of the production and being a response to growing consumer demands", says Jan van der Blom, head of APROA's Agro-ecology department. This is not a negligible success considering that this production area supplies over 47% of the domestic Spanish market and 50% of the European one, reaching more than 60% during the winter months, when continental production is not viable due to low temperatures. In total, solar greenhouses provide healthy food to 500 million Europeans.

## Pepper at the forefront of organic control

This season, integrated pest control will be deployed in 99% of the surface area dedicated to peppers, exceeding 60% for the rest of the products. Specifically, 73% of the surface area used for growing aubergines is done using this technique, 70% for cucumbers, 60% for tomatoes and 16% for courgettes.

## Integrated production and biological control

Integrated production combines different pest protection strategies, including not only the release of insects and mites but also physical barriers such as double doors at the entrance to solar greenhouses, insect screens on windows and walls of the greenhouse and insect traps, both chromatic and pheromone. The release of predatory insects and mites or Biological Control aims to maintain pest populations at a level that is harmless to the crops. In addition, the functions of these insects also include pollination of flowers, a mission of bumblebees.

## The next step: entomohotels

The introduction of beneficial insects and mites in Southern Spain's solar greenhouses has been such a success that work is already underway on the next step: entomohotels. This project consists of the implantation of perimeter hedges of native flora around the greenhouses and the construction of shelters for the beneficial insects and mites (entomohotels). This has a double objective: on the one hand, to build an initial barrier to reduce the introduction of pests inside the farms; and on the other hand, to mitigate the visual impact caused by the plastic used in this type of facility.

### About CuTE SOLAR:

*The EU co-financed CuTE-SOLAR is a promotion program that brings together a consortium made up of the Association of Producer Organizations of Fruit and Vegetables of Andalusia (APROA-Spain), the Spanish Fruit and Vegetables Interbranch Association (HORTIESPAÑA) and FruitVegetablesEUROPE (EUCOFEL). The campaign seeks to increase awareness of the specific features of EU fruit and vegetables agricultural production methods (solar greenhouse) and the characteristics of EU fruit and vegetables (varieties, quality, taste) in the EU internal market. Actions will be conducted in three EU countries (Belgium, Germany and Spain) from 2020 to 2022.*

### For more information contact:

**Christine Burger**  
[cburger@cognito-pr.de](mailto:cburger@cognito-pr.de)  
+49 89 12090132

**Álvaro de Mingo**  
[ademingo@admmr.com](mailto:ademingo@admmr.com)  
+34 659 093 183  
cutesolar.eu  
