

REPORT

—Crop care

RIGHT—Stockton Group CEO Guy Elitzur at the Fruitnet booth during Fruit Logistica in Berlin

Timorex Gold, the flagship product of Israel-based biopesticide specialist Stockton Group, has earned an international reputation as a biofungicide over the past 20 years. The proprietary product, which is based on extract of *Melaleuca alternifolia*, has been a hit in Latin America's banana industry, where it has been used for the treatment of Black Sigatoka. Registered in over 30 countries, Timorex Gold is also used to control a spectrum of diseases across a range of other crops, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, grapes and berries.

In recent months, Stockton Group has scored a breakthrough in the international expansion of Timorex Gold after receiving approval for its use in China, Brazil, New Zealand and the US (where it is now registered in 49 out of the 50 states) – albeit on selected crops.

Stockton Group is particularly optimistic about the prospects for Timorex Gold in China, not least as it is supported in that market by its Chinese partner Sichuan Hebang Corporation, which owns 51 per cent of the group.

The US\$4bn Hebang group, which has investments across a range of sectors, not only provides significant financial support for Stockton international expansion, it also brings the network in, and understanding of, the Chinese market.

"Over the past two years, the Chinese government has been providing a lot more support and subsidy to encourage farmers to use sustainable biological products and solutions," explains CEO of Stockton Group Guy Elitzur. "Our partners can help us to



Stockton eyes Gold future

BERLIN—Israel-based Stockton Group sees great potential for its Timorex Gold biofungicide in the Chinese market.

by John Hey

understand the market – its complexities and challenges – and to capitalise on these opportunities."

Although excessive chemical usage is a big issue for China's agriculture sector, Elitzur says the industry understands the benefits of using natural crop solutions.

"China has a tradition of using herbs and all kinds of plant extracts in medicine and agriculture, so there is already this level of understanding," he notes. "But the overwhelming majority of these bio-solutions are locally developed and supplied."

Timorex Gold is one of the first global biopesticide products to come to the Chinese market from outside the country, he adds. "It's very exciting for us as we have a great deal of experience with many of the crops they're growing in China, so we can bring this international expertise and understanding – a unique offering to the grower."

Elitzur says Timorex Gold can deliver significant benefits for Chinese farmers, which will ultimately

improve their profitability.

"First and foremost, it's about biological control of pests, but overall there's a package of benefits. Timorex Gold brings improvements in terms of plant physiology – vigour, greening, quality and yield," he says. "The use of Timorex Gold in spray programmes can also help farmers to harvest and bring their crops to market earlier, thereby extracting better prices."

Stockton Group signed a distribution agreement with a Chinese company ahead of the country's agriculture season, which started in March. Timorex Gold is currently registered for use on bananas, tomatoes, cucumbers and berries. "We'll be focusing more on the western and central regions of China with these crops to begin with," says Elitzur.

He acknowledges that Stockton Group faces significant challenges in China. "It's a huge country with millions of tiny farmers, so we have to set up the distribution channels, and a team to support them," he says. "Pricing of our product compared with the local solutions is another challenge to overcome, particularly if we want to expand to other crops."

"It's basically the issue of how a small company manages such a big market, but we are confident of success with the support of our Chinese partner."

"We think China will become one of three biggest markets in a couple of years, together with the US and Brazil," Elitzur concludes. 