



Israeli Co. STK's Botanical-Based Biofungicide Spreading Across U.S.

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by **Lorrie Griffith**/*editor-in-chief*

STK Bio-Ag Technologies is working to get its flagship botanical-based biofungicide, Timorex Gold, to more and more farmers.

Timorex Gold, used to control a broad spectrum of diseases in a variety of crops, now is being used in about 40 U.S. states, with California soon to be added, according to Guy Elitzur, CEO of STK, who spoke to *The Shelby Report* just prior to speaking at the World Agritech Summit in San Francisco in March. The company first brought its products to the U.S. market in 2016.

STK is the new name for Stockton, a company based in Petach Tikvah, Israel, that was founded in 1994.

Elitzur said the change to STK—which has been the company's logo for many years already—coincides with “our ambition and vision to provide biological solutions and to look at the entire food chain as a whole, not just on the crop level.”



Guy Elitzur

While Timorex Gold is used in farmers' crop spraying programs to improve crop quality and increase yield by controlling pests, its benefits stretch through to the store and then to the fork. Evidence shows that, in many cases, produce that is treated with the botanical-based solution (BBS) can be harvested earlier and thus get to retail sooner in the season. There also is evidence that the produce stays fresher longer in the store, meaning longer shelf life. For the consumer, signage on produce treated with Timorex Gold can communicate the lower chemical impact and residue associated with using it.

Elitzur said, "We are definitely bringing products that have the same efficacy level as any of the chemicals. On top of that, we are providing benefits that fit with what the farmer needs when he is going to sell his goods to the next partners in the food chain."

Timorex Gold can be used in both conventional and organic agriculture; it is registered and sold in more than 30 countries.

Elitzur said Timorex Gold currently is being used on more than 20 different crops around the world.

"We are talking about grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers and other fruits and vegetables that we are applying our Timorex Gold currently in different spraying programs," he said. "Of course, organic is a natural market for us, but we want farmers to know it can be used in conventional programs and how they can reduce chemicals and replace them with our biological product."

Some Florida tomato growers are using Timorex Gold, integrating it into a conventional spray program, he added.

"We definitely see our biological products as a complementary solution to conventional programs and as good candidates to replace any other chemical," Elitzur said.

Just in the last couple of years, grocers have begun to—thanks to consumer pressure—reach out to farmers to communicate the need for "cleaner" produce.

"In the last couple of years, the supermarkets and the food companies have been basically guiding the farmers on what is the standard protocol for them to use if they want to be farmers of that company or supermarket chain," he said. "There is an increasing awareness from this side of the food chain, and that comes, of course, from the consumer pressure to have better food to eat."

He said education is needed across the supply chain as it becomes shorter and more transparent.

“There will be an increasing level of demand to understand the components and products that were applied on this crop that people are eating,” Elitzur continued. “Everyone today is looking at the ingredients of the food they are consuming. I expect that people, as they become more aware, will require from their supermarket chain to make sure that the pesticides that their farmers are using are good pesticides. We can definitely bring a good solution for the farmers that not only deal with the high level of efficacy on the crop but also bring benefits to the health of the crops and at the end of the day, improve the health of the foods.”

On the food manufacturer level, STK is working with Nestlé cacao farmers in Ecuador so that the farmers will be able to supply Nestlé with clean-label ingredients for its chocolate products.

“Part of this project is to work with the agronomic team at Nestlé and educate the farmers how to use biologicals so the cacao they are producing will be healthier, with fewer chemicals, less toxicity,” Elitzur said. “That’s an example of a project I think we are going to see more of.”

STK gets into aquaculture

The newly named STK will comprise two business units: STK Bio-Ag, the business mentioned above, serves global agriculture markets with its botanical-based and “hybrid” solutions for crop protection. STK Aqua will serve the fish and shrimp farming industry globally, offering biological solutions.

With the new name comes an updated logo, which maintains the company’s orange trade dress while adding a new bio-ag technology descriptor.



Elitzur said STK began getting into the aquaculture business a couple of years ago.

“Whether you grow salmon in Norway or Chile or you grow shrimp in Ecuador or China, chemical products are being used during the growing process. Part of our products is aimed to replace this chemical and to make sure the salmon people are eating or the shrimp we are consuming have less residue and less toxicity in the growing process.”

He said that even though the regulation in aquaculture is less advanced than the agriculture, “we are perceiving that the regulation will catch up and the consumer demands to get healthier fish will be increasing, and definitely our product fits with this.”

Business manager named for U.S.

In April, STK Bio-Ag Technologies named Neal Job its USA business manager, responsible for continuing the rollout of Timorex Gold. He also will be continuing the rollout of Aviv, a “low-

dose" microbial biofungicide (*Bacillus subtilis*) that delivers broad-spectrum disease control in both soil and on plant surfaces. Aviv currently is approved for use in 26 states.



Neal Job

Over his career, Job has served as VP-managing partner of Cultiva LLC; a director of U.S. sales for Marrone Bio Innovations; and a sales lead for Syngenta. He has a bachelor's in agribusiness marketing from California Polytechnic State University. He also holds a California Pest Control Advisor's License and California Qualified Applicator License and has served as president of the Kern CAPCA chapter.

Elitzur said, "STK is pleased to have Neal Job as a key member of our team, heading one of our most important markets. Neal is a longtime expert on biopesticides generally, is highly experienced in the technologies of STK, and is well-positioned to continue helping growers, PCA's and others along the food supply chain as USA business manager."

Job said, "I'm happy to join STK Bio-Ag Technologies and look forward to introducing many more U.S. growers and others to the benefits of Timorex Gold and other STK technologies, including resistance management, residue reduction, faster arrival to retail, longer shelf life at retail and greater competitiveness in U.S. and international export markets."