

# FRUIT GROWERS NEWS



APR 26, 2021

## Hybrid use puts Regev in ‘game-changer’ mode

A hybrid fungicide approved in 2020 by the EPA for use in the United States had previously been used successfully in 14 countries.

When Israel-based STK Bio-ag Technologies rolled out the product in America with the help of its distribution partner, Summit Agro USA, Regev “hybrid” fungicide was hailed as a “significant game-changer,” by Julia Levy, STK Bio-ag Technologies’ director of business development.

“STK has been successful in U.S. markets for several years with its botanical-based biofungicide Timorex Gold,” Levy said in an interview with Fruit Growers News. “Now comes Rejev, which is a ‘bridge’ for many growers who have never tried a product with biological content. That’s because Regev is a ‘pre-mix,’ so it is easy for the grower to use in exactly the same way as his current chemical fungicide. Nevertheless, with Regev, the grower gets the added benefits of reduced chemical inputs, lower chemical residues of his fruit and vegetables, a dual mode of action providing outstanding management resistance and much higher yields.”

“We’re very enthusiastic about introducing Regev to the U.S.,” Levy said. “We’ve been doing field trials there for more than three years now. The results are excellent. Growers there are really enthusiastic about the product, as are we to work with them.”

Regev, touted as the first potent hybrid fungicide in the market, has a unique activity that presents a low probability for the development of resistance or cross-resistance in plant pathogens, its developers found. The hybrid formulation contains 200 g/lit difenoconazole + 400 g/litL tea tree extract. Trials have shown this formulation provides various plant defense mechanisms of action including systematic acquired resistance and induced systematic resistance for improved efficacy in plant disease control and the cultivation of successful crop yields.

## **Outreach to growers**

“The three main markets in agricultural pesticides are the EU, the USA and Brazil,” Yair Nativ, vice president of sales at STK Bio-ag Technologies, told FGN. “Getting Regev registered in the U.S. is a huge step for us. Brazil will follow in, I believe, in two to three years. And then it’s Europe’s turn. It will take a long time to register in the EU due to all the regulations.”

Regev has already been registered in Israel, Serbia, the Philippines and various Latin American countries, and is in the registration process in Brazil, the U.S and the EU.

“We’ve been working on Regev for the last eight years,” Nativ said. “The question now is how to pass this experience to growers as quickly as possible. We consider this product to be the bridge to the biopesticide future.”

The vast majority of growers, including those in the fruit and vegetable sector, have never used or even tried biological products, Nativ said. “Regev is a much easier product to use, understand and see its benefits.”

Regev is a premix, hybrid product. Growers can use it exactly the same way they’re using their current chemical fungicide, Nativ said. “But, now they have the benefits of lower residue on their products, improved resistance management and higher yields. All that makes the growers more competitive.”

One of the main challenges currently facing STK Bio-ag Technologies in America is getting Regev registered in California. Nativ expects that will happen within a year. “California’s a huge agricultural state within the U.S. So, that’s essential. We also need to introduce the product to as many growers as possible, in the shortest time possible.”

Regev has two main advantages, Nativ said. “Firstly, the product contains two active ingredients. One is chemical, the other natural. That means there’s only one MRL (maximum residue limit) on the fruit or vegetables. Especially since people want to eat foods with fewer and fewer pesticide residues, Regev is currently particularly suited to crops that are eaten fresh, such as tomatoes and grapes.”

Nativ said the second advantage is allowing the growers to access a dual mode of action with a very low probability for the development of resistance. He said using only one active ingredient could lead to the build-up of resistance. “So, we are allowing the farmers to use two modes of action.”

This product can, however, not be used for organic groups. But, it can contribute to growing more sustainable, conventional products.

“We believe that in order to create sustainable agriculture, you need to lower the rate of application of chemicals,” Nativ said. “And bio-solutions is one of the best ways to do so and remain sustainable.”

“That makes growers more willing to learn more about it,” Levy said. “Its biological component provides improved health and stress resistance. That might lead farmers to move to a fully natural product sometime in the future.”

## **Environmental focus**

Nativ said growers are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious. “They supply whatever the public demands. It’s all a question of price and what the customer wants. Growers are very open to change. They just need to understand what’s needed.”

When it comes to Asia, Regev is, so far, registered only in the Philippines.

“The Asian market is slower to adapt to biopesticides,” Nativ said. “But we do believe we will get there. It will just take a little longer.”

STK Bio-ag Technologies plans to introduce another hybrid product to the market within the next three to four years.

“In the long term, we have other products coming to the market, too. We believe that in 10 to 20 years, biological fungicides will be far more widely accepted. But, until then, we think hybrid products will lead the way,” Nativ said.

When Summit Agro USA announced the introduction of the first hybrid fungicide for U.S. agriculture – Regev, it was seen as “the next generation disease control product combines the benefits of a botanical product with the advantages of a conventional fungicide.”

“Regev brings together tea tree oil and difenoconazole giving growers across a variety of crops a very effective disease control product, while reducing chemical usage and providing effective resistance management control,” said Fred Yates, Summit Agro marketing manager for botanical products. “The preventative and curative activity of Regev with a broad crop and disease control label, plus its ability to enhance plant growth and yield all provide significant value to growers.”

— *Gary Pullano, editor*