

NEED FOR INNOVATIONS AND BETTER FARM PRACTICES IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Biostadt India Limited which has been serving the farming community for over two decades maintains an impressive track record taking forward its strategy to head the leading position in the Biotechnology research-based agro inputs. This strategy has been further supported with safer and specialty chemical pesticides. The tremendous growth in the business in a span of just 6 years (from INR 100 crores in 2007 to INR 400+ crores in 2013) has itself created a story to talk about. In an interview with Agriculture Today, Mr. Juzar S. Khorakiwala, Managing Director, Biostadt India Limited discusses the broad scenario of crop protection business in India.



What is broad Indian and global scenario of crop protection business?

Agrochemicals and related input industry is a growing business. It is approximately \$60 billion industry growing much faster in countries such as India, China and other emerging markets. Since labour cost is rising in the developing world, herbicides are experiencing greater demand. Further, a lot of consolidation is taking place in the industry. For example, Dow Dupont, Syngenta Chem China, FMC Cheminova, Monsanto etc. and a few others.

What are the product offerings and largest selling brand of the company?

Biostadt India Limited is a diversified organization in the Agriculture and Aquaculture space. Our leading brand is BIOZYME in the nutrition category. This brand over the last 20 years has gained acceptance by farmers by increasing production and quality of their farm produce. We have been recognized as a global key supplier of this product by markets and research agencies in UK. We have been exporting to many countries for 20 years. Along with this product, the farmers demand safe and niche pesticides for their crop protection. We have strategically allied with the Japanese for licensing their molecules for their superior quality. ROKO, BIOMYCIN and MAIDEN are the leading brands for their respective molecules nationally. We are also present in seeds, Aquaculture inputs. Biostadt has a large presence in Philippines which replicates our business here in India and a joint venture in Vietnam for the shrimp farmers.

How has been the performance of the crop protection industry in the last few years?

The industry in the previous two years has been at headwind with nature with the consecutive drought for two years lowering farm incomes and creating a cash flow drop in the system, creating lower sales higher inventory buildup, and high returns. However, the industry is highly dependent on monsoons and hence its fortunes are often dictated by the external factors.

What are the major policy and regulatory issues concerning the industry?

Our current government has laid great emphasis on agriculture and rightly so when 300-400 million farmers who live off the land. It is imperative to focus governmental initiative like crop insurance, drip and water irrigation, rural infrastructure etc. This government is rightly addressing this issue with great priority. On the regulatory front, the industry yet faces huge bureaucratic hurdles in registering product and related issues. The industry hopes that the ease of doing business in this area is addressed by the current government.

What is the new trend in the Indian Crop Protection market?

As the agricultural productivity in India is very low compared to countries

like Japan, need for innovations and better farm practices is the need of the hour. We at Biostadt have been highly focused on nutrition segment which is gaining attention of many companies in India and world wide. Bio-stimulant based products such as Biozyme have been in the forefront of leading this change. Horticulture farmers use more amounts of differentiated nutrition, seaweeds, reduced level of water consumption, controlled usage of pesticides and have boosted their yields to highest levels. This has come as another need to the farmer after basic fertilizers and pesticides.

How has been the business growth in the last few years and what is your expansion plan for this financial year?

Our growth in the last few years have been at double digit levels due to our nutrition business and our other diversified verticals. However, the last two years have been stressful, but we have maintained our pace of growth. This year with a very positive weather forecast we hope to grow much faster than previous years. We intend to grow organically by expanding our distribution reach, introduction of new products and new markets.

Given the high achievements in exports, can India emerge as the global sourcing hub for agrochemicals?

The 'Make in India' campaign of the government has given us an edge. The Indian agrochemical manufacturers are global players. For the great amount of investments which have been made in emerging markets in South America and Africa for registrations, India is in a very good position to compete with China in many types of farm chemicals.

There is increasing integration between seed and agrochemical businesses globally. How do you view that development?

Yes there is an increase in integration between seed and agrochemical businesses globally. However, the demand cycle for the seeds and agrochemical business are entirely different. This poses a unique challenge

on the supply chain side of this business. Though the end user farmer is the same the above mentioned challenges make it difficult for the companies to integrate the seeds and agrochemicals business.

Is the company involved in any extension activities? How do you create a rapport with your end users that is farmers?

Recently we started a new service called the ELITE farmers club. We approach large farmers with landholding of 100 acres and above, and provide them soil testing facilities, crop advice and also service their input needs. As a result, these progressive farmers patronize us and create a word of mouth marketing platform within their social and farming

circles. We also go out into interior villages with adequate infrastructure, and demonstrate our products, our company and our offerings.

What are the steps that have to be adopted for a cleaner and safer chemically inclusive agriculture?

Education is the primary factor of creating a safe environment for agrochemicals. Great amount of focus has to be given on how to use the products. We have 150 jeeps and vehicles with projectors who go around and educate and create demand for our products. Being in nutrition focused business it is projecting a very clear message of cleaner and safer means for increasing agricultural production.

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Admission Notice published in Agriculture Today issue June 2016 may be read as followings:

- Selection procedure of MBA will be based on CAT-2015 score only followed by GD/ PI and work experience.
- Bachelor's degree and equivalent are eligible.
- Completely filled application will be accepted till 30-06-2016 instead of 20-06-2016.
- For further details refer our website www.niftem.ac.in

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