

AgroSpectrum

Envisaging Future Updating Present

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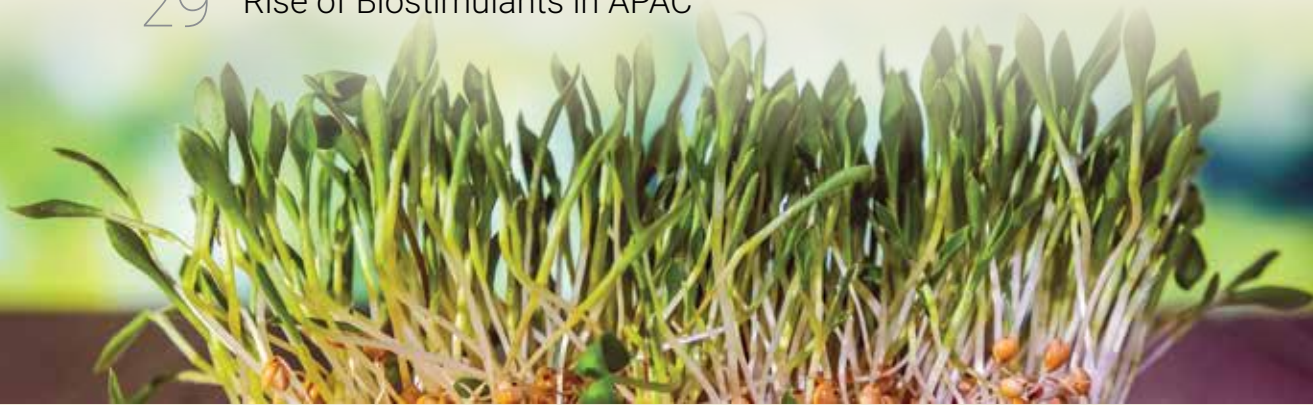
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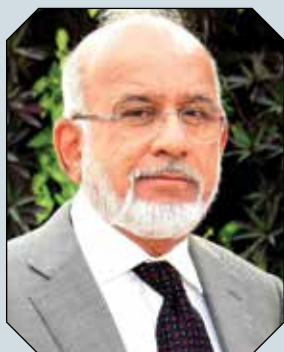
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“Biostimulants are set to become an integral part of India’s agriculture system”

JUZAR S. KHORAKIWALA,

Chairman & Managing Director, Biostadt India

Biostadt India, one of the world’s largest companies in seaweed-based plant biostimulants, with multiple brands under its umbrella was started in 1987 as Biostadt Agri-sciences under the leadership of Juzar S. Khorakiwala. With a presence in over 20 countries, Biostadt India is a diversified agrochemical organisation with an annual turnover of Rs 1,000 crore. The company has gained a solid reputation in the agrochemical industry, with a focus on developing crop healthcare products that utilise biological means of plant protection and to increase farm productivity. One of their flagship products, Biozyme, is the world’s largest selling plant growth stimulant. In an interview with AgroSpectrum Juzar S. Khorakiwala, Chairman & Managing Director, Biostadt India Limited, shared his views about the future prospects of the biostimulant industry in India. Edited excerpts;

How do you envisage the future of the biostimulants industry in India?

With the ongoing developments within the agriculture industry today and the environment becoming more positive, it is only a matter of time for biostimulants to become an integral part of the agriculture industry. We should be able to see a marked change in the industry within one decade.

Most Indian families have landholdings of less than 2 hectares each, and they are heavily focused on increasing harvest yields. How do you feel about biostimulants as a new advancement in this regard?

Intensive cultivation over a period of time has exhausted the soil resulting in a significant depletion of fertility levels. With the use of biostimulants which are, by nature, more effective on crop growth, farmers will be able to achieve better yield making it more feasible for them to produce and sell better quality crops. This also results in better soil health and productivity.



Which types of biostimulants are most popular among users, and where in the country are they most commonly used?

Amongst those available today, we see the use of biostimulants that have high content of amino acids, humic acids and especially seaweed extracts. These are being used effectively to improve agricultural yields across the country.

If we compare biostimulants with biopesticides and biofertilisers, which is producing better results and why?

Biostimulants, biopesticides and biofertilisers

are all essential to agricultural production. Each of these have a specific role to play according to the requirements of the crops. Among them, biostimulants play a vital role in improving soil health and productivity of the crops, ultimately benefiting farmers.

What are the major challenges that are hampering the growth of biostimulants in India?

Limited awareness mainly amongst small farmers, about biostimulants and its features is one of the many challenges faced. However, guidelines and regulations that are being put in place more effectively, are very important and helpful for serious players like Biostadt that manufacture organic products. Another challenge is the time it takes for biostimulants to positively impact the soil. The repeated use of soil depletes its nutrition quotient. With the use of biostimulants, this previously low nutrient soil is enhanced over a period of time. The transformed soil is then able to produce better quality yield and thereby help the farmer with good quality and quantity of crops.

The Indian government announced in April 2021 that biostimulants would be governed by the same standards that regulate fertilisers and other crop nutrients used to boost soil health. Is this move by the government striking the right chord for the industry? Can you elaborate on this?

This is indeed a very positive change occurring in the Indian agriculture industry. This will set the direction and regulations required for farmers to be able to produce quality products.

This pandemic has influenced consumer behaviour in favour of organic produce to the point where it may become an integral part of people's shopping habits. Can this shift also be considered as a positive sign for the biostimulants industry?

A significant population of India is becoming aware about the quality of food consumed. The use of biostimulants will be very helpful in improving the quality and productivity of produce which will have an impact on sales for

the farmer community.

What are your expectations from the government?


The government is on the right path and we are positive and hopeful for continued support in terms of regulations and guidelines to help the biostimulant industry. This will be immensely helpful for companies that are dedicated to the segment.

The biostimulants that promote root growth and increase size of the fruits and vegetables are getting increasingly popular. What is the reason for this?

Farmers that are able to sell better produce are much more effective than farmers that sell low quality produce. With increased awareness and concern towards the nutritional content of fruits and vegetables consumed today, it is imperative for the farmer to be able to produce and sell good quality products. Due to this high demand, farmers need to be able to grow good quality and a variety of crops almost all year through. This increases the pressure on the soil, drastically impacting its health. Factors such as intensive cultivation and environmental aspects such as the lack of rainfall or in some cases, more than adequate rainfall are detrimental to crop yield.

With all these factors under consideration, biostimulants have therefore been found to be most effective towards producing better quality crops. The soil is enriched with nutrients resulting in a stronger and better yield.

There remains a huge dearth of efforts for generating awareness and promoting the use of biostimulants for sustainable farming in India. How can this issue be resolved?

The support from the government and regulatory bodies, the media and more informative and educative drives done in a manner to directly target farmers, will certainly result in a more effective spread of awareness on biostimulants and its positive features. Effective communication at all touchpoints such as retail and purchase outlets, can also enhance awareness levels. 

Nitin Konde