

AgraQuest showcases microbials

US biopesticide specialist AgraQuest was showcasing its range of microbial products at its recent Fruit Logistica appearance.

Ceo Marcus Meadows-Smith told FPJ: There are huge food security demands around the world and it is not right for farmers to have to compromise on yield and profitability. Older, more toxic pesticides are getting banned and leaving gaps in the portfolio of farmers.

Our key drivers at AgraQuest are consumers and retailers. Most of our products are certified organic and around five per cent of our business is supporting the organic sector. About 95 per cent of our business involves conventional farming. We are designing programmes to meet the need for safe, affordable food.

Biopesticides now account for \$1 billion (638.5 million) of the global \$40bn agrochemical market, said Meadows-Smith, and over the next 10 years the biopesticides, or low-chem market, is expected to grow to \$10bn.



Marcus Meadows-Smith, AgraQuest ceo

Rather than organic or integrated pest management, we talk about a low-chem sector, he said. This makes sure that the grower doesn't have to give up on yield, efficacy or profit, but can deliver a clean, residue-free crop. We do this by reducing chemical load or increasing productivity without increasing chemical levels. Our main target is to produce better food.

AgraQuest distributes its own products in the US and

Mexico, where its headquarters and manufacturing plant are located respectively, but deals with BASF to distribute its Serenade fungicides internationally, outside these markets. AgraQuest continues to seek additional partners to commercialise other fungicide and insecticides in its portfolio internationally.

Around 40 scientists are employed in the firm's R&D sector, and the company is

the largest private sector group researching biopesticides in the world.

AgraQuest biopesticides are sold in 25 countries and seven new actives are being field tested in the US. Microbial Serenade is Annex One approved and was launched in the UK last year, with Fargro as the distributor. The product is also sold in France, Italy, Germany, Ireland and Switzerland and a listing is pending in Spain and Greece. ■