



Three food chain partners cooperating for **success**



The Italian
Table Grape
project



Bayer CropScience

Ensuring high quality levels in table grapes

How it all started

The fortunate combination of favourable climatic and environmental conditions makes the Italian region of Puglia particularly suitable for growing table grapes. In fact, Puglia produces more table grapes than any other region of Italy, accounting for two- thirds of the national output.

The table grapes cultivated in Puglia include both white and black varieties, seeded or seedless. The most cultivated varieties are:

- White: Sugraone, Melissa, Vittoria, Italia
- Black: Palieri, Black Pearl
- Red: Crimson, Red Globe

For more than five years, The Greenery, one of Europe's leading service providers in fresh fruit, vegetable and mushroom sector, has been working closely with Agricooper, one of the largest producers of table grapes in Puglia. At Fruit Logistica 2008 The Greenery, Agricooper and Bayer CropScience agreed to develop a grape protection programme that meets the requirements of a more and more demanding market in terms of the quality, and commit the extra food safety demands regarding MRL levels of the table grapes produced by Agricooper.





What was the aim

The aim of the project is to produce high quality table grapes by applying a crop protection programme that optimises the use of plant protection products according to Integrated Crop Management (ICM)/Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles. To this end, the partners have been working together first to meet the demand for high-quality table grapes that do not exceed the maximum residue levels established by the European Union, and second to bring down the level of residues of plant protection products in the final produce without compromising crop quality.

Who got involved in the project

The producer: Agricoper is a very market-oriented family farm based in the Puglia region of Southern Italy. The Liturri family has been producing and marketing fruit and vegetables for more than three generations and exporting table grapes to the most important European markets since 1972. Since Agricoper was keen to prove the transparency and traceability of its production process, it was only logical that The Greenery should choose Agricoper as its partner in this project. The farm's standards are certified to ISO 9000/2000, GLOBALGAP and BRC-IFS. Moreover, Agricoper is known to continuously invest in the quality of its produce.



Domenico and Vito
Liturri, Agricoper

The farm is located in fertile territory a few kilometres away from the sea where a favourable windy and sunny climate allows the production of Italia grapes with their typical yellow colour and delicate muscatel fragrance. Currently, the table grapes traded by Agricoper are Italia, Red Globe, Palieri, Vittoria, Seedless Sugraone and Seedless Crimson. All these varieties come from selected vineyards and are protected during the growth and maturation period by films that help the grapes ripen, make late-season grapes possible and maintain an excellent product quality.



The table grapes are selected in the vineyard and directly transported with pre-cooled lorries to the packhouse in Noicattaro. Once packed, the grapes are immediately moved to the pre-cooling area and four or five hours after harvesting, they are loaded onto conditioned lorries that transport them to any Northern European destination within 48 hours.

Service provider: The Greenery is one of Europe's largest service providers, supplying supermarket chains in Europe, North America and the Far East with fresh produce throughout the year. Other major target groups include other wholesale businesses, catering companies and industrial processing companies. The Greenery is a Dutch-based cooperative owned by producers who market all their produce via the organisation. One of The Greenery's aims is to commit the food safety demands of the modern retail industry. The Greenery places great importance on sustainable relationships with producers such as Agricoper. Organising the shortest possible chain and optimally matching supply and demand are top priorities. Food safety and product quality are continuously subjected to a strict monitoring programme, in which The Greenery supervises and works closely with all its partners in the food chain.

Bayer CropScience Italy: Not only does Bayer CropScience provide innovative products for crop protection, it has also been partnering The Greenery and Agricoper in finding the most satisfactory state-of-the-art solutions to meet the needs of the market and all participants in the food chain.

The confidence-building solution

Ben Burgers, agronomist and responsible for the Agricoper project at The Greenery, describes his organisation's role: "We like to coach our producers in the use of pesticides. That was why we approached Bayer CropScience at Fruit Logistica in Berlin."

Grape protection programme: The project got under way last spring when Bayer CropScience technicians came up with a proposal for a grape protection programme covering an area of four hectares. This proposal was discussed with Agricoper and Ben Burgers and then implemented during the 2008 season. All three partners met every eight weeks to discuss the project's progress, and Agricoper was in almost daily contact with Bayer CropScience technicians. They monitored the application in the field and consequently suggested several adjustments to the programme during the growing season.

The crop protection solutions applied included the insecticides PRODIGY®, SUCCESS® and ENVIDOR®, and the fungicides FLINT®, PROSPER® 300CS and TELDOR®. These products deliver high levels of efficacy and have a good toxicological and residual profile.

Quality controls: Analyses were carried out at several stages of the growth process. During harvesting several analyses of residues were made to carry out regular checks on the quality of the produce.

Constructive cooperation: Ben Burgers describes the co-operation between the project partners as "excellent – a constructive atmosphere, open and honest dealings, and a high degree of transparency. What is more, we had the grape producer, the service provider and the pesticide producer all involved. In other words, the whole food chain was covered."





What was achieved

The grape protection programme implemented with Bayer CropScience's help enabled the crop to be efficiently protected, with the result that the Italia table grapes produced in the 2008 season were of the required high quality. In all cases residue levels were very low. In this way, it has been possible to manage the protection strategy of the vineyard better to produce excellent quality.



What comes next

Summing up the progress made so far, Ben Burgers points out that "you cannot complete a project like this in just one season. This is not like a machine you can just switch on and off. We are dealing here with nature and with people, neither of which can be controlled every day. The results are the first important steps to achieve the goals of the project. What we do have is a truly committed partnership and a strong level of cooperation, and that makes me confident that we can achieve our ultimate goal in the near future – the production of high quality crops which meet our customers' expectations."



**Ben Burgers,
The Greenery**



Consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the need for healthy nutrition. Food chain partnerships help to supply consumers with high-quality fresh produce, which forms the basis of a healthy diet. But such partnerships can only succeed if they involve every player in the food chain – from the farmer and processor to the exporter or importer and retailer. Bayer CropScience has the global experience and cutting-edge expertise to create a successful partnership at every level.

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