

*Report by Paul G. Becher, Dept. Plant Protection Biology, Chemical Ecology Horticulture Unit*

### **Best Practice for Pest Management: Competence Development in Practical Plant Protection**

Current challenges such as providing food security for a growing population, finding adequate solutions to cope with climate change and the accelerating rate of species extinctions directly relate to the need of sustainable production and protection of agricultural crops. Political directives and regulations provide a framework to guide the practical application of plant protection. This framework as well as available pest management tools are changing fast and require continuous competence development in research, education and application of plant protection. This *Best Practice* project supported my continuous development of competence in practical plant protection as a researcher and teacher at SLU.

Specifically:

- Through this project I was able to attend the qualification training for practical application of plant protection products at the Swedish Board of Agriculture and to complete a 5-day course arranged by the County Administrative Board (Länsstyrelsen Skåne) in 2021. The training provided me with a wider theoretical background as well as the formal practical competence to professionally apply plant protection products outdoors. This knowledge is applied in SLU teaching and triggered new ideas to develop educational activities. Moreover, the qualification is useful for the practical research activities at the Department of Plant Protection Biology (vsb).
- In 2021, the project allowed my attendance at the “berry course” at Hook, which is Sweden’s most relevant meeting for berry growers. The course brings together various stakeholders within horticultural production including growers, plant protection companies and advisors. The meeting provided valuable information related to horticultural plant protection e.g., about resistance of new berry varieties and available plant protection products. In addition to knowledge that is of use for SLU teaching, the meeting helped to communicate current research activities at SLU and to make new contacts.
- In meetings with advisors from the company Biobest/Biobasiq and from the Rural Economy and Agricultural Societies (Hushållningssällskapet, HIR Skåne) I further developed competence in the application of biocontrol organisms in horticultural greenhouse and tunnel production systems, gained new knowledge on horticultural pests and difficulties related to management. The project led to ongoing discussions with advisors and identification of common goals related to pest management. The contacts are of relevance in a current MSc project and development of future student and research projects.

In summary, the project further developed my theoretical, practical, and formal qualification in practical plant protection, widened and tightened my professional network and increased my competence as a SLU teacher. The project supported professional development, research at vsb and our exchange with society in relation to plant protection.