

PRESS RELEASE

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Protix, Bühler Insect Technology Solutions and University of Copenhagen join forces to research the susceptibility and resistance to diseases of production insects

Protix, leader in insect protein production, Bühler Insect Technology Solutions, provider of advanced insect production and processing facilities, and researchers from the Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences at the University of Copenhagen have entered into a collaboration. During the next year the partners will jointly investigate how the black soldier fly responds to various insect pathogens. The project goal is to establish preventive measures that allow a safe and robust insect production free from diseases. The results of this research will be open to the public and others in the industry.

Black soldier fly larvae (*Hermetia illucens*) can contribute to creating a circular food system as they are very effective in turning low-grade food waste into valuable high-end proteins and fat. At the same time, they are known for being rich in oils and protein, which makes them particularly suitable for ingredients production for food and animal feed. That is why the insect sector is emerging quickly.

Compared with other insect species in production, black soldier flies seem to be very resistant to diseases. Yet research is needed to better understand the response of an insect when exposed to pathogens. This jumpstarted a collaboration between academia and industry, since both have a mutual interest in assessing the disease risk in more detail. Protix, Bühler Insect Technology Solutions and the Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences at University of Copenhagen have started a one-year collaboration with the aim to gain more insight into disease prevention in black soldier fly production facilities.

“Currently, we do not know much about how this fly responds to diseases other than it seeming to be rather resilient, but we lack a scientific explanation for this. We will now carry out experiments in our research facilities in Copenhagen to study how the black soldier fly responds when infected with pathogenic fungi and bacteria. This will lead to vital knowledge about best practices to maintain insect health in production facilities”, says Professor Jørgen Eilenberg from Department of Environmental Sciences.

Eric Schmitt, Director of R&D at Protix, highlights the relevance of this work for the emerging insect industry: “Research on the health of the black soldier fly will help to define early detection and identification of diseases as well as treatment procedures. The insights will support our large-scale production and enable us to continue creating reliable and high-quality output without unexpected production losses.”

The partners invite all colleagues in the industry to ask questions, review the project results and to share their own experiences by reaching out to the University of Copenhagen in order to enrich the industry's knowledge on this topic. The partners also hope to encourage other academic groups to contact them with the purpose of combining research efforts. Andreas Baumann, Head of Technology at Bühler Insect Technology Solutions, explains the relevance of collaboration: "The decision to make this work open to the public is an outcome of discussions we had with other producers and researchers of the black soldier fly. All acknowledged the importance of a broad, collaborative effort on this topic."

About Protix

*Protix is the leading insect company in circular, natural and sustainable proteins from insects. Our mission is to bring the food system back in balance with nature. Insects are part of the solution to the protein crisis while building a natural and circular food system with minimised food waste. The black soldier fly (*hermetia illucens*) is a key player in bringing our vision to life: their larvae provide us with a unique source of protein for food and feed. We are the market leader when it comes to high quality and scalable insect ingredients production. What makes this possible are the 100+ unique individuals within our company, who are engaged and empowered to make a difference. Our belief in the power of the insect inspires the passion and creativity that makes us successful.*

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