

Lessons learned from an extensive communication program around virus yellows in The Netherlands

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Introduction

In 2019, the situation on insect control and especially aphid control in sugar beet changed dramatically due to the ban of the neonicotinoids. To control virus yellows, a set of strategies according to the general principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), is followed.



Creating awareness

In 2018 it became quickly apparent to stakeholders, IRS, Cosun Beet Company and advisors that the solution should consist of different agricultural measures, and it was necessary to create awareness around:

- crop and farm hygiene
- damage threshold levels
- the right insecticide
- the new normal

Therefore, the IRS together with Cosun Beet Company initiated an extensive communication program to create awareness around virus yellows (Table 1).



Table 1 Number of communication tools used.

	advisors				growers			
	'18	'19	'20	'21	'18	'19	'20	'21
workshops	2	5	5					
trial visit	1							
presentations	2	2	2	2	51	51	4+19	17
publications	3	11	10	6	3	11	10	6
field day		8	online			8	online	
text messages						-	1-4	0-2
no. alerts						-	0	15
videos	3	2	1			3	2	1
short field visits						18		

Aphid warning system

An aphid warning system was re-introduced^{1,2,3}. The aim was to minimize yield loss due to virus yellows¹. The number of green aphids per monitoring field were presented in real-time on an interactive map on the internet and in the 'Beet Advisory System' (BAS)-app (Fig. 1).

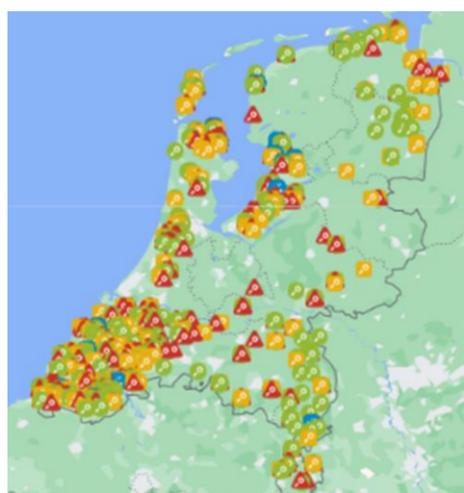


Fig. 1 The aphid map shows a green icon when green aphids are not found, an orange icon when the numbers found are below the threshold and a red icon if the damage threshold has been exceeded. More information is available and shown when the icon is clicked on (www.irs.nl/bladluiskaart).



The outcome

Through a good collaboration between industry, research, advisors and growers there was a lot of attention to virus yellows and aphids. Besides all the planned communication many articles were published on agricultural sites/magazines (free publicity).

Virus yellows control is only possible with a combination of agricultural measures. Yellowing viruses cannot be eradicated, but with the right strategies it is possible to control them.

Lessons learned

- An interactive map alone was not sufficient.
- (Additional) text messages were still very effective.
- Workshops were very effective.
- Also communicate don'ts to growers and advisors (e.g. don't use pyrethroids to save beneficials).
- Growers were more alert once they had seen virus yellows.
- Good to have a system like this, each year is different.



References

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