# International Organization for Biological Control of Noxious Animals and Plants

## History of the first 50 Years (1956-2006)

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## Preface

The International Organization for Biological Control of Noxious Animals and Plants (IOBC), is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. This provides us with an excellent opportunity to publish a historic review, to complement the various meetings that have been organised worldwide. The mission of IOBC is to promote the development of biological control and its application in integrated control programmes, where biological control means the use of living organisms or their products to prevent or reduce the losses or harm caused by pest organisms (or, in short, the use of biota to control biota). During the past 50 years, IOBC has been an effective advocate of biological control, applying its considerable influence as an independent, international, professional body to assist policy making in FAO, EU, OECD, World Bank and other international lending banks, NGOs and national agricultural and environmental ministries.

The first official plenary session of IOBC took place on 20 November 1956 in Antibes, France, after ideas had been expressed to establish an international organisation of biological control at the 8th International Congress of Entomology in 1948 in Stockholm, where experts in this field met under the auspices of and supported by the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS). At that time, ecologists and entomologists had serious concerns about environmental and health effects of chemical pest control, and they considered biological control an important potential alternative for pesticides. Biological control was, of course, not new to science. The first description of use of biological control dates from around 300 AD, when predatory ants were used for control of pests in citrus orchards in China, a method which is still used today in Asia. “Modern” application of biological control started in 1888, when an entomologist set sail from San Francisco for Australia to collect natural enemies for the control of the exotic cottony cushion scale insect in citrus. He was successful in finding natural enemies and sent a total number of 129 Vedalia beetles to California. These predatory beetles were propagated and by June 1889, more than 10,000 adult beetles had been distributed throughout the infested citrus areas. In a little more than a year after the accidental release of the scale pest, its populations had collapsed throughout most of the infested Californian citrus regions. After this project, many successes followed and several large national organisations for development of biological control programmes were created.

In continental Europe, however, biological control was practised in few countries and there by only a small number of researchers. Therefore, at the IUBS meeting in Stockholm in 1948, it was thought necessary to combine the skills of these relatively small national research groups in Europe under the umbrella of an international organisation. This resulted in the IOBC, which was originally a mainly European affair. The formation of numerous working groups resulted in excellent work and several important European biological control and integrated pest management (IPM) projects, and later integrated plant protection (IPP) projects were developed and implemented. In 1971, IOBC Global was established and the European group became one of the six Regional Sections which represent the world’s major biogeographical zones. The activities of the various Regional Sections have evolved differently, but experiences in certain regions have helped developments in other regions. IOBC Global profited considerably, for instance, from 15 years of IOBC experience in

Europe. The same can be said about the Working Groups. With its global network of collaborating scientists, IOBC now has the status of a dependable, professional organisation providing objective information about biological control and IPM.

We expect that the IOBC will continue to play an important role in realizing sustainable and environmentally friendly food production worldwide. In those areas where we currently see overproduction of food (e.g. Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand) we foresee that biological control will be used increasingly because it contributes to the maintenance or augmentation of biodiversity, and also because consumers appreciate pesticide-free food. In these areas, biological control will be the corner-stone of Integrated Protection and Production of food. In areas where food production does not yet meet demands, biological control can be used to reduce the production costs, increase production, contribute to improved health and safety of farmers, and a cleaner environment.

As we celebrate IOBC, it is worth noting some of its remarkable features:

- An international organisation without permanent staff, without permanent physical headquarters, without permanent offices and (up to 2006) without official archives;
- An organisation with high international reputation and low budget, financed by official institutional members, individual and supporting memberships whilst remaining fully independent;
- An organisation run on a voluntary and honorary basis by a motivated community of independent scientists, university teachers and field advisers;
- An international organisation with a long tradition and reputation as a trend-setter, identifying, addressing and developing emerging future fields of interest in the context of a sustainable agriculture;
- An effective and influential organisation without professional public relation managers and marketing departments.

In summary it is an organisation where the contents of the package were always more important than the wrapping paper.

Frequent changes in the composition of executive committees of IOBC Global and the Regional Sections has made it difficult to summarise the history of such a colourful and highly stimulating organisation, as there were no archives to consult. In preparation of this review, the editors have invested considerable time to collect, to read and to analyse both published and unpublished documentation from around the world. These facts and figures were augmented by anecdotes and eye-witness reports. The editors themselves provided overlapping continua of personal experience in IOBC management, since 1956 in the case of Vittorio Delucchi, since the late 1960s in the case of Ernst Boller and since the early 1970s in the case of Joop van Lenteren. It was indeed this strongly individual, and hence transient, knowledge of IOBC's history that influenced the decision taken in 2005 to start a systematic collection of historic traces and personal reflections, and to create from these a permanent IOBC archive in Switzerland.

Many colleagues have made most valuable contributions to this book either by adding interesting details to Parts I to VII, or by writing short historic reviews of individual IOBC Commissions and Working Groups presented in Appendix I to III of this book. In reading all these texts, you will discover another interesting characteristic of IOBC: its linguistic diversity. The vast majority of persons actively involved in IOBC activities do not communicate in English as their mother tongue, but in 30 or more different languages. Inevitably, the effort to communicate during international meetings and through written

contributions in IOBC publications has created an unorthodox but lively “IOBC English” which captures the flavour of the authors’ own culture and geographic regions. Transmitting the content has always been more important than striving for linguistic perfection. Therefore, following a long IOBC tradition, we as editors of this book have refrained from linguistic polishing of the individual contributions but have intervened discretely where errors could have led to serious confusion.

As many abbreviations of organisations and countries have been used in this book we have added a list of acronyms in Appendix IV to facilitate reading

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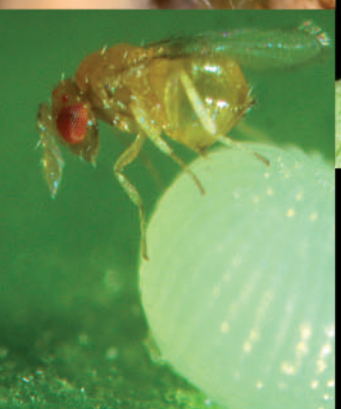

The IOBC promotes the development of biological control and its application in integrated plant protection and production programmes. Biological control is the use of living organisms to prevent the losses caused by pest organisms or, more succinctly, the use of biota to control biota. The IOBC coordinates biological control activities worldwide in six regional sections (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, East Europe, West Europe and the Mediterranean, North America, and Central, Caribean and South America) and working groups. This book describes the origin and development of the organisation and gives a historical overview of its activities.

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