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Establishing New Start-up “oleacare” Producing Parasitoid for Olive Fruit Fly Pest Management in Tunisia

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Own Start-up Development in Biological Control Sector, Tunisia

Abstract

Tunisia is the most important southern Mediterranean country in the field of olive production and export after the European Union. Actually, for Tunisia, olive growing is the main agricultural activity and its socio-economic role is of paramount importance. Despite this fairly comfortable place on the international market, unit prices of olive oil are largely unfavourable to Tunisia, compared to its main competitors. In fact, residues of pesticides in Tunisian olive-oil are the main obstacle to the creation of value in the export sector.

Tunisian olive producers are using extensively pesticides to control the most serious olive fruit fly pest (*Bactrocera oleae*). The oviposition activity of the females as well as larval feeding are responsible for the destruction of olive fruits. As a result, infested olives completely lose their market value for table consumption and oil production.

In order to enhance the Tunisian organic olive-oil to its full potential on the international market, the rationalisation of the use of pesticides as well as their substitution by eco-friendly method of olive fruit fly control remain OBLIGATORY!

In this context, the aim of the start-up “Oleacare” is to offer alternative solution to pesticides and to contribute to the development of organic olive-oil production sector in Tunisia. The start-up idea is based on the principle of Biological control, and its main activity of is the mass-rearing of *Eupelmus urozonus* a parasitoid that can accomplish goals of a biological control programme with an acceptable cost / benefit ratio.

The start-up idea is supported by the favourable government policies encouraging investment in innovative technologies for alternatives to pesticides, as well as its commitment to promote biological control for olive tree pest management.

Keywords: Biological control, olive fruit fly (*Bactrocera oleae*), parasitoid (*Eupelmus urozonus*), tunisian organic olive-oil