

Bábolna Bio celebrates

It was celebration time for well-known Bábolna Bio, the Hungarian international developer and manufacturer of pest control products, as nearly 100 invited guests assembled to celebrate the company's 50th anniversary. *Pest* editor, Frances McKim, was amongst the group of Bábolna Bio friends gathered on 18 September to record this notable achievement.



Appropriately the company hosted this special event at the site of the organisation's original location – the town of Bábolna some 65 miles west of Budapest, Hungary. Originally set-up in 1965 as the Bábolna Disinfection Centre (a division of the Bábolna State Farm) it was tasked with the job of eradicating the rats and mice in the newly erected chicken houses. Another epic rodent eradication programme followed in 1970. At the time 32.8% of all the premises in Budapest were infested with rats. Over 21 months, 112 employees with 20 vehicles reduced the infestation level to just 0.5%. Since January 1973 the city has maintained its rat free status.

The demand for suitable rodenticides to deal with situations such as these led Babolna, in

1970, to formulate its own products – Racumin B and Rodentox. By 1981 the company had begun selling rodenticides in small consumer packs – a strategy which has now become highly successful.

It should not be forgotten that, throughout this period, Hungary was part of the Soviet-controlled Eastern Bloc. With the change of politics in 1989, the Soviet influence faded, but it took the company until September 2000 before all state ownership was eliminated. Since then, with considerable effort and a huge loan (now repaid), the company has been totally owned by its management/employees – around 70 individuals. This fact may well explain the long average length of employee service. 45% of staff have been with the organisation

for more than ten years, with seven members clocking-up over 33 years. With 42 years of service, joint managing director, Dr Daniel Bájomi is equal longest serving.

In 2011 the business split into two, the successful pest control servicing side and a separate product manufacturing and development business – the Bábolna Bio we know today.

Secrets of success

János Daru, joint managing director, explained the key decisions, some taken many years ago, that have led to the company's success. First, the demand for rodenticides was so great that the company established its own production capabilities – the first rodenticides used having been imported from Bayer. Second, was the establishment of their own sales network and, from the 1990s onwards, the development and creation of their own brands and unique formulations – for example, the Protect Revolution bait system. In this both rodenticide bait and water-based gel are presented alongside each other in tamper-proof trays. A feature János describes as RodentiScience.

Finally, with the arrival in 1998 of the EU biocidal regulatory requirements (now the EU Biocides Regulation) János said: "Many



Joint managing directors, Dr Daniel Bájomi, left, and János Daru opened proceedings

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The Bábolna stud farm was the venue for the celebrations. The stud's origins go back to 1789 and the Austro-Hungarian Empire but it too was part of the large Soviet era state-owned Bábolna enterprise that gave birth to the present day Báblona Bio

competitor companies thought Bábolna Bio would not be able to meet the new stringent EU requirements. But we thought differently! In 2011 the European Commission approved the company's rodenticide, bromadiolone, as a biocidal active substance. Today, we hold seven approved product dossiers in 17 EU Member States (with two ongoing through the process) as well as 57 product authorisations and an even greater number in progress."

Demand from their sister servicing company activities resulted in the addition of the insect growth regulator, S-methoprene, to the company's portfolio. As Dr Daniel Bájomi explains: "An effective active ingredient was needed in the 1980s to combat cockroaches in Budapest housing estates. Initially we imported aerosol insecticides but, working alongside the Technical University of Budapest, we developed the use of S-methoprene. In January 2014 the European Commission approved S-methoprene as a biocidal active substance for use in the insecticide product group and we are now submitting for product authorisations throughout the EU."

The use of S-methoprene in the pest control and veterinary market sectors is well-known,

but, interestingly, Daniel added that a significant use of the active is as a grain protectant in Australia. Maybe something we will be hearing about in Europe?

The business is rooted in the Hungarian home market where sales remain significant, but exports have grown to account for just over half of all sales. Between 1992 and 2014, total sales have increased 15-fold, now amounting to around £10.5m. Sales are made in over 50 countries. France and Switzerland account for half. Other leading markets include, the USA, Romania, the UK, the Netherlands and Slovakia.

Well done Bábolna Bio and here's to another successful 50 years.

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Dr Daniel Bájomi, left, receives a commemorative glass vase from Juraj Agoston, MD of Bábolna Bio, Slovakia



A huge array of products are made for professional, garden and home pest control

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