

# Report stakeholder session & observer partner meeting Bio4safe



## 1 Summary

The stakeholder & observer partner meeting as part of the Bio4safe project on Wednesday 20 March was a successful event. More than 40 participants were informed on the setup and status of the Bio4safe project. In addition, participants provided valuable feedback on the setup of the Bio4safe project. Also, a number of interesting discussions were held on biostimulants, seaweed biostimulants and the strategy and future plans of the Bio4safe project. Finally, a few key take-home points were identified:

- Demonstration trials with biostimulants are key to convince end-users (farmers)
- There appear to be a general lack of knowledge of (seaweed) biostimulants among stakeholders
- Almost all stakeholders call for clear application manuals for each biostimulant product
- There appears to be a disconnect between observed lack of knowledge and some biostimulants producers/wholesalers that already have a large customer base for biostimulant products
- There is limited awareness of what the Bio4safe project is actually about

### 1.1 Actions you can take today

Let us know

- If you want to receive bio4safe project reports, [click here](#)
- If you want to stay up to date with the Bio4safe project, [click here](#)
- If you want to be contacted to discuss closer involvement/support to the Bio4safe project, [click here](#)

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### 3 Introduction

On the morning of Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, the main meeting hall of the appealing Carlton Ambassador Hotel steadily filled up with individuals with an interest in seaweed biostimulants as well as the role and progress of the Bio4safe project. With almost 40 stakeholders from all over the agricultural industry arriving from Belgium, France and the Netherlands and the UK, the workshop promised to be highly engaging and useful.

### 4 Welcome and project introduction

At the start of the stakeholder meeting, North Sea Farm (NSF) provided a brief introduction to the Bio4safe project, the concept of biostimulants and the possibilities for the use of seaweed in the biostimulant industry. Subsequently, each project leader briefly introduced their work package as well as providing a short progress update.



*Figure 1: Bertrand Vandoorne explains setup and status of Work Package2*

## 5 Interactive session

The main topic of the workshop, the interactive session, was briefly introduced by Eef Brouwers with some examples. Participants had been divided into colour-coded groups representing five components of the potential seaweed biostimulant industry. Due to the large number of biostimulant producers, they were divided into two separate groups (A & B).

<b>Biostimulant producers A</b>
<b>Biostimulant producers B</b>
<b>Science &amp; Research</b>
<b>End-Users (farmers)</b>
<b>Seaweed producers</b>
<b>Retail &amp; Wholesale</b>

*Table 1: Stakeholder group division*

During the session, a sequence of statements/questions were presented. After each of these, the groups were asked to agree on a joint response. Then each group presented and discussed their response with all participants.

The aim of this session was both to have an interactive discussion around the actions and ambitions of the Bio4safe project and to use this feedback to take the first steps in formulating a roadmap towards successful roll-out of seaweed biostimulants during and after completion of the project.



*Figure 2: Mijke Perneel clarifies the groups response to one of the statements in the interactive session*

### 5.1 Sentiments on biostimulants as a whole

For the first five statements, participants were asked to answer yes/no/don't know without providing additional clarification. For the final report, these responses will be analysed and reported in bar graphs, similar to the example provided below.

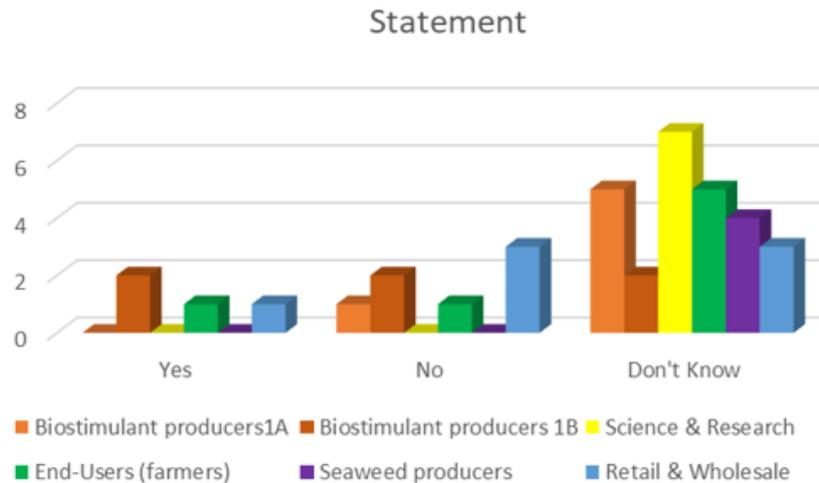


Figure 3: Bar graph of initial 5 statement sentiments

### 5.2 Opinions on biostimulants and the Bio4safe project approach

For subsequent statements, stakeholder groups had two minutes to come to a consensus before placing their stances on a graph. Groups with interesting positions were asked to clarify their positioning, opening a brief discussion before moving on to the next statement. The resulting will be represented in the final report as seen in the example below.

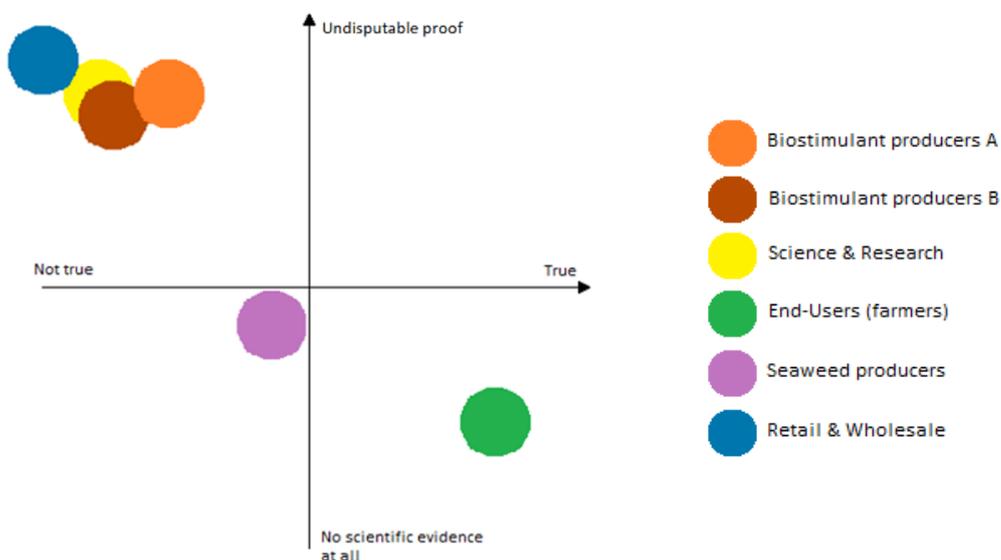


Figure 4: Graph of stakeholder group statement stances

### 5.3 SWOT analysis of seaweed biostimulant market

Last year, a SWOT analysis on the seaweed biostimulant market was performed. This SWOT analysis was presented with a request to provide feedback on its conclusions.

Strengths	Weakness
S1. Availability of high quality & sustainable seaweeds S2. Well informed market players	W1. Limited knowledge when and how to use biostimulants properly W2. Very few and non-cultivable seaweeds are being used for biostimulants
Opportunities	Threats
O1. Market demand for biostimulants is growing O2. Growing momentum to change to more sustainable production methods O3. Local cultivatable seaweed species may also suitable as biostimulants	T1. Inconsistent legislation for biostimulants in the EU T2. False claims on benefits and effectiveness of biostimulants

Table 2: SWOT analysis of seaweed biostimulant market

Each group had to single out one statement which they completely disagreed with as well as provide a statement which they thought was clearly missing, after which they were asked to briefly clarify their decisions. An example of this can be seen in the table below, which represents the stakeholder responses regarding perceived threats. The colours correspond to the various stakeholder groups

Threats
T1. Inconsistent legislation for biostimulants in the EU <span style="color: red;">-</span>
T2. False claims on benefits and effectiveness of biostimulants
<span style="color: orange;">+</span> Difficulty for new players and new products entering market
<span style="color: purple;">+</span> Insufficient amount of seaweed
<span style="color: blue;">+</span> Bad influence on entire biostimulant market if seaweed underperforms

Table 3: Stakeholder assessment of threats

## 5.4 Building blocks for success

Finally, each group was given 7 sticky notes, each represent a statement on potential key elements (designated as “building blocks”) in the roadmap determined by Bio4safe. To gain an insight into what actions stakeholders would recommend and why, each group was asked to place these statements, as well as one optional “missing building block” as identified by themselves, on an axis graph ranking importance on the x-axis and urgency on the y-axis. Again, they were asked to briefly discuss their verdicts. The resulting will be represented in the final report as seen in the example below.

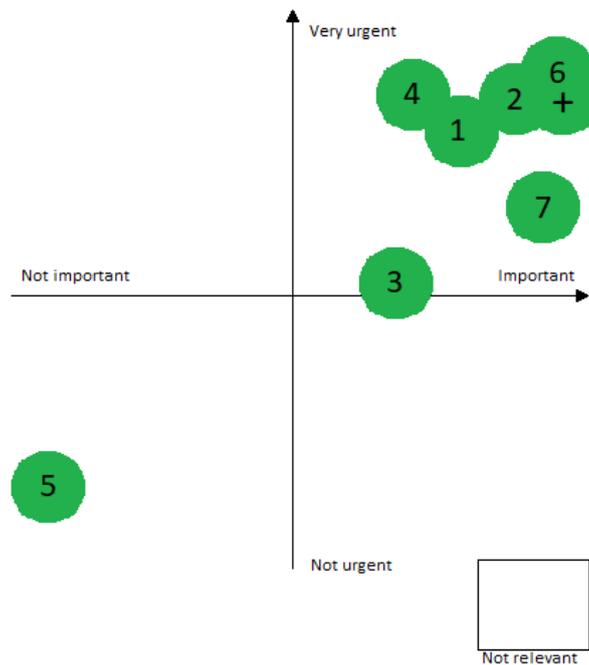


Figure 5: Graph of stakeholder group building block priorities

## 5.5 Closing remarks

After this highly interactive session, both biostimulant producers and wholesale & retail sensed an atmosphere of unfamiliarity with biostimulants and highlighted an already present volume of information and experience around biostimulants and seaweed in agriculture, both in Europe and abroad. More information on the Bio4safe project and trial results was broadly requested among stakeholders and they were eager to be sent both the presentation slides as well as the final report, for later use.

The overarching sentiment which the Bio4safe project partners perceived around the workshop is that stakeholders felt included and that their ideas and worries were being heard.

## 6 Take home points

- Stakeholders agree that the best way to convince farmers of the viability of a product is to exhibit it through demonstration trials. This advice goes along nicely with the existing activities and plans of the project, where a lot of trials at farms are being performed and visits with stakeholders will be set up.
- There is a strong perception of lacking knowledge amongst stakeholders on both biostimulants as a whole and on seaweed biostimulants specifically. Likewise, some groups feel that there is a lack of information shared with stakeholders on what is being done within the Bio4safe project. This issue is being addressed through ongoing research with test trials and through gathering of relevant literary information and previous trial results. Additionally, Bio4safe currently has 4 available reports on market research which could provide an insight into both the current biostimulant market situation and the progress of the Bio4safe project, as it aims to expand and compete within these markets through assertion of seaweed as a biostimulant. Stakeholders themselves can also help abate this lack of knowledge by sharing what they can amongst each other.
- Scientists, biostimulant producers and end-users all call for clear application manuals for each biostimulant product. This can be communicated to current and aspiring producers of biostimulant products. Since all performed actions are recorded in the trials associated with the Bio4safe project, it should be possible to provide clear and precise instructions for application in similar setups.

To conclude, stakeholders are willing to collaborate in order to progress the developing industry of (seaweed) biostimulants. They see great potential but fear there is need for more proof of (cost) effectiveness to allow regulations to be an asset instead of a hindrance.

Therefore, there was a substantial demand for more information around seaweed biostimulants, which the NSF can provide through sharing market analyses as well as by making connections between stakeholders, so as to effectively encourage the expansion of the seaweed industry.