

For Immediate Release

Italy is the Second European Country to Issue Emergency Use Authorization for Vestaron Peptide-Based Bioinsecticide for Control of Tomato Leafminer

European access follows significant market growth in US specialty crops

April 22, 2024 – (Durham, North Carolina) – Italy becomes the second country in the European Union to grant farmers emergency access to Vestaron’s novel bioinsecticide SPEAR® LEP to tackle devastating infestations of tomato leafminer (*Tuta absoluta*) — a pest that has been known to cause significant and costly yield losses in Europe.

The Italian Ministry of Health granted emergency use authorization for SPEAR LEP, Vestaron’s peptide-based insecticide. Available for growers in Italy to use on tomatoes from March 28 to July 25, SPEAR LEP is a biological product that targets lepidopteran pests such as tomato leafminer, navel orangeworm, European grapevine moth, codling moth, loopers, and caterpillars. The Ministry of Health states that SPEAR LEP is appropriate for use in integrated pest management programs due to its novel and unique mode of action and offers low toxicity to mammals and other vertebrates, as well as beneficial insects and pollinators, including bees. An emergency use authorization for SPEAR LEP was granted by the Greek Ministry of Agriculture for use on tomato crops in February 2024.

“Farmers in Italy and Greece will now have access to a much-needed new mode of action to help them continue producing the food our growing society requires. We have submitted applications to the European Commission for full approval in Europe as farmers face universal challenges such as insect resistance to traditional products, the increasing restriction of chemical pesticides, and consumer demand for healthy, nutritious food delivered at a reasonable price,” said Juan Estupinan, Vestaron’s interim CEO and president. “Vestaron’s peptide-based bioinsecticides are revolutionizing crop protection delivering both high efficacy and enhanced environmental benefits.”

In experimental studies conducted in Italy and other European countries, SPEAR LEP has demonstrated efficacy against the target pest under both open-field and protected conditions, including in populations that may be resistant to other commonly used insecticides.

Italian grower group Società Cooperativa Agricola Aurora, which petitioned the Italian Ministry of Health for the emergency authorization, said it was delighted that the temporary authorization had been granted, giving its members the chance to effectively and sustainably control costly tomato leafminer infestations. “Having access to effective biocontrols like SPEAR LEP is vital to helping producers reduce pesticide use — supporting profitable production while lowering farming’s impact on the environment,” said Giuseppe Buggea, Aurora’s president.

“With a unique mode of action, SPEAR LEP provides Italian tomato growers with a sustainable solution to use in rotation with other categories of pesticides, helping to protect crop quality and yields while preserving the efficacy of the limited range of products available to combat this prevalent pest,” said Mr. Buggea.

SPEAR LEP has been in use in the US since 2020, with subsequent approvals in Mexico and Canada, and it has been submitted to the European Commission for full approval in Europe. Based on naturally occurring peptides found in spider venom and produced using natural fermentation, SPEAR LEP has a unique mode of action (IRAC group 32) with no known resistance or cross-resistance with other synthetic pesticides, while presenting minimal risk to people, pollinators and beneficials as determined by USA EPA and Canadian PMRA regulatory approvals.

About Vestaron

[Vestaron](#) is leading a global revolution in crop protection by creating novel, effective, and sustainable solutions our customers need to meet the growing challenges of modern agriculture. Founded in 2005 and headquartered in Durham, NC (USA), we are producing a pipeline of powerful insecticides with new modes of action based on peptides modified from the venom of spiders and other venomous animals. Naturally soft on pollinators, beneficials, and local biodiversity, our innovations have earned recognition from the Crop Science Awards and the EPA’s Green Chemistry Challenge. In 2024, we became the first agriculture and food company inducted into the Global CleanTech 100 Hall of Fame. *Vestaron: Unconventional, by nature.SM*

Media Contact:

Steve Betz
Vestaron – VP Communications
sbetz@vestaron.com
+1 515 707 6096