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Vestaron Receives Second Round of Emergency Use Authorizations for SPEAR LEP to Combat Crop Pest in Italy, Greece, and Cyprus

Peptide bioinsecticide will help farmers effectively and sustainably protect crops

March 6, 2025 – (Kalamazoo, MI) – Italy, Greece, and Cyprus have for the second time granted farmers emergency access to Vestaron's novel bioinsecticide SPEAR® LEP to help protect high-value tomato crops from devastating infestations of tomato leafminer (*Tuta absoluta)*. This follows initial emergency use authorizations (EAU) for SPEAR LEP in 2024 by governments in all three countries as growers in the EU face tight restrictions on the use of traditional chemical products. Vestaron is working with grower groups in several additional countries to secure EUAs to help meet their crop protection needs.

Tomato leafminer infestation causes significant yield losses (up to 100 percent) in tomato and other crops. Growers in these three countries will again have access to the world-first biological insecticide with its novel mode of action for 120 days. SPEAR LEP delivers precision-targeted control of lepidopteran pests, including tomato leafminer, armyworm, codling moth, European grapevine moth, and other caterpillar species, while maintaining a low toxicity profile for mammals, vertebrates, pollinators, and other beneficial insects. Similar EUAs were granted last year in all three countries reflecting Vestaron's unique ability to address critical crop protection challenges as insect resistance to traditional chemical products is rising along with demands for environmentally sound solutions.

"SPEAR LEP was tested on a large scale in Sicily during the emergency use period from March 28 to July 25, 2024 and showed a significant ability to kill *Tuta* larvae," remarked Dr. Andrea Occhipinti, local Italian Agronomist, "In addition to its strong efficacy in the field, this new peptide has high specificity and selectivity for the target insect. This means it has no side effects on other beneficial insects, such as bees and natural predators, thus reducing its impact on the ecosystem. Furthermore, it is a product safe for animals and the environment. As natural molecules, peptides are generally safe for humans, animals, and non-target organisms. They are biodegradable and, if used correctly, do not persist in the environment. This makes SPEAR LEP a valuable control tool to include in an integrated pest management plan."

"Achieving a second series of emergency use authorizations underscores Vestaron's position as a world leader in the development and commercialization of desperately needed novel solutions to help growers sustainably protect our food crops," said Juan Estupinan, Vestaron CEO and President. "Our proprietary technology platform is harnessing the power of peptides to produce a robust pipeline of highly effective tools that will shape the next era of crop protection. We continue to work with the European Commission toward full approval of our ready-now solution and prepare for the rollout of additional bioinsecticide active ingredients in the near future."

In studies conducted in Italy and other European countries, SPEAR LEP demonstrates efficacy against the target pest under both open-field and protected conditions, including in populations that may be resistant to other commonly used insecticides. In 2023 Vestaron became the first US company to receive the European Bee Award, given by the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) in the category of *Technological Solutions to Reduce Farming Operations Impact on Pollinators*.

"ELO welcomes the proactive steps taken by Italy, Greece, and Cyprus to support tomato growers in addressing urgent pest challenges. However, emergency authorizations remain a short-term solution and highlight the broader need for a more predictable and efficient regulatory framework for biocontrol products across the EU. European farmers must have timely access to innovative, sustainable solutions for all crops, and not just under emergency conditions. We look forward to working with regulators and stakeholders to ensure a more enabling environment that accelerates access to these essential tools." said Dr. Jurgen Tack, Secretary-General of the European Landowners' Organization.

SPEAR LEP has been in use in the US since 2020, with subsequent approvals in Mexico and Canada, and it has been submitted 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 the U.S., 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 that enhance any IPM program. 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. Vestaron is the first agriculture and food company inducted into the Global CleanTech 100 Hall of Fame. *Vestaron: Unconventional, by nature.*[SM]

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