

Portugal Grants Vestaron Bioinsecticide Emergency Use to Protect High-Value Tomato Crops from Devastating Pest

SPEAR® LEP secures EU emergency use authorization from fourth country ahead of anticipated full regulatory approval

July 8, 2025 – (Kalamazoo, MI) – Portugal has granted emergency use authorization (EUA) for Vestaron’s groundbreaking bioinsecticide SPEAR® LEP, enabling farmers to protect tomato crops from devastating infestations of tomato leafminer (*Tuta absoluta*). This 120-day authorization provides Portuguese growers with access to a novel mode of action to address a critical pest threatening the country’s significant tomato production, particularly in the face of increasing resistance to traditional insecticides.

Vestaron is partnering with Lainco, a Spanish company with a rich 90-year history of specialization in the development, manufacture, and commercialization of agrochemicals around Europe. LAINCO’s technical and regulatory expertise, combined with deep local market knowledge, will be key to maximizing the impact of this innovative solution in Portuguese market.

Since its first appearance in Portugal’s Algarve and Madeira regions in 2009, tomato leafminer has spread across the country’s tomato-growing areas, impacting both industrial and fresh consumption tomatoes. In 2023, Portugal cultivated approximately 18,440 hectares of tomatoes, yielding 1.8 million tonnes, making it one of the EU’s leading tomato producers after Italy and Spain. However, challenges such as water shortages and late-season tomato leafminer attacks resulted in only average yields last year. Portuguese grower group Centro Operativo Tecnológico Hortofrutícola Nacional (COTHN), which petitioned the Directorate General for Food and Veterinary Affairs for the emergency authorization, said it was delighted that the temporary authorization will provide its members with a new tool for the effective and sustainable control of tomato leafminer infestations.

Initially controlled by diamide insecticides, tomato leafminer has developed resistance, necessitating a strategic integrated pest management (IPM) approach. SPEAR LEP is a biological product derived from naturally occurring peptides found in spider venom and produced through natural fermentation. Proven on over 1 million acres, SPEAR LEP offers precision-targeted control of lepidopteran pests, including tomato leafminer, without known resistance or cross-resistance to synthetic pesticides, making it an essential component of resistance and integrated pest management programs. Field trials in Europe demonstrate SPEAR LEP’s performance matches traditional synthetics.

“Portugal joins Italy, Greece and Cyprus in stepping forward to provide effective and much-needed solutions for growers facing evolving pest challenges,” said Juan Estupinan,

Vestaron CEO and president. “SPEAR LEP’s proven peptide-based technology empowers farmers to protect their crops while supporting biodiversity and environmental health. We are actively pursuing full approval of SPEAR LEP in Europe and expanding our pipeline of novel bioinsecticides to meet global agricultural needs. Our collaboration with LAINCO exemplifies a shared commitment to bringing cutting-edge biocontrol solutions to European agriculture through our combined expertise in innovation and regulatory strategy.”

“This partnership with Vestaron reinforces our long-term vision of transforming crop protection through biotechnology,” said Hugo Cores, Marketing Director, LAINCO. “By introducing SPEAR® LEP, we are not only providing Portuguese farmers with a new tool against *Tuta absoluta*, but also taking a decisive step toward building a more resilient and sustainable agricultural model starting in Portugal.”

Fully biodegradable and highly specific to the target pest, SPEAR LEP poses minimal risks for pollinators, has an excellent human and environmental safety profile, a 0-day pre-harvest interval, and no maximum residue limits. Vestaron’s innovation was recognized with the 2023 European Bee Award for Technological Solutions to Reduce Farming Operations Impact on Pollinators, making it the first US company to receive this honor.

About Lainco

Lainco, S.A., headquartered in Barcelona, Spain, is a leader in the development and commercialization of agrochemicals and phytosanitary products, with a strong commitment to sustainable agriculture. Specializing in innovative crop protection solutions, Lainco supports farmers across Europe through advanced formulations and strategic partnerships, promoting integrated pest management and environmentally responsible practices.

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 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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