A LITTLE AI WITH YOUR WIMBLEDON STRAWBERRIES

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A LITTLE AI WITH YOUR WIMBLEDON STRAWBERRIES

Sustainable strawberries pollinated by AI influenced hover-flies.
LONDON, UK: Strawberries and cream are synonymous with the Wimbledon tennis fortnight, running this year from 3rd-16th July. UK agtech startup Olombria is partnering with the UK's largest fruit growers to ensure that the volume and traditional quality of fruits are preserved as the industry experiences many pressures.

Fruit farming has many modern challenges, and the need to control pests and enhance pollination of berry flowers is a constant management challenge. In the past, bees have been strong allies in the pollination of fruit, but bees are in jeopardy, and their numbers are diminishing fast*. New farming techniques beyond open fields utilising poly-tunnels and closed environments used in vertical farming techniques create challenging environments for hive-based bees to operate in, and their stress can also increase stinging hazards for farm workers. Consequently, bees are no longer the 'top seeds' in the pollination game.
Instead, Olombria raises a combination species of hoverflies (natural bee-mimics that don't sting) with larvae that are voracious consumers of aphid pests.

When given the right coaching, these fast-flying hive-less insects are better performers in modern farming pollination situations, so Olombria uses advanced AI vision systems and natural semiochemical lures to encourage the hoverflies to the right part of the crop at the right time. The result is strawberry fruit yields that are 20% heavier and raspberries that are 56% heavier - and aphid outbreaks are brought under control within the optimal timeframe.
Olombria's Integrated Pest and Pollination Management (IPPM) approach both eliminates the continuous threat of aphid infestations and enhances pollination in the changing environments of modern farming.

As chemical pest control options become more restricted, farms are turning to biocontrols to seek and destroy bugs that weaken the plants and deform their leaves but putting these controls in the right place is something Olombria's AI vision systems are trained for. The same system ensures that hoverfly adults get busy pollinating the plants when the bloom is right, using lures to increase their activity and targeting them in the correct area.
Just as Hawk-Eye gives the tennis Umpire unambiguous play information, Olombria also provides Berry Gardens growers with valuable enhanced data on the condition of their plants at every stage of their maturity, whilst Olombria's systems use that data to adapt to deliver the best IPPM results for the crop.

Tashia Tucker, CEO and Founder of Olombria said, "We are delighted to work closely with progressive organisations like Berry Gardens to show how nature can be empowered by new technology to enhance natural growing environments without the use of chemical sprays and to deliver the best fruit possible. Our combination of skills in AI, semiochemical lures, and insect rearing and release, places us in a unique position to support growers around the world."

As we prepare for exciting battles on the Wimbledon courts, spare a thought for the battles in the berry fields of the UK, where insects compete to bring you the perfect tennis accompaniment. It's game, set and match to the hoverflies.

* (Widespread losses of pollinating insects in Britain, G.D Powney et al, 2019)

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About Olombria Olombria is an agricultural technology company that brings together entomological expertise and technologies to deliver an Integrated Pest and Pollination Management (IPPM) solution to enhance the yields of insects pollinated crops.Insect pollinators provide a vital ecosystem service for crop pollination in wild plants, and over 75% of crops worldwide benefit from insect pollination through increased yields at harvest. The number of wild pollinators, especially bees, is steadily declining globally

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due to industrial agriculture, pathogens, loss of biodiversity, use of pesticides and climate change. This documented decline poses a significant risk to the production of many crops and threatens food security.Olombria encourages hoverflies to be more efficient pollinators, in scenarios where bees are no longer as viable or efficient. Using AI vision systems and data analysis in combination with semiochemical lures, hoverflies are released and choreographed to wreak carnage amongst pests and become the insect world’s best pollinators.Olombria also provides horticultural growers with data on pest and pollination performance as well as environmental conditions bringing predictability to unpredictable environments

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