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# PRESS RELEASE

## BIGSIS CLOSES OVERSUBSCRIBED SEED PLUS ROUND AT £1.5 MILLION

*Lab and testing milestones achieved for affordable chemical-free agricultural insect control solution*

**READING, UK, October 14, 2021:** BigSis, the British agtech start-up promising low-regulation, chemical-free control for the majority of the world's insect pests in horticulture and agriculture, announced today that it has closed its £1.5 million Seed Plus financing round, following success with key laboratory and testing milestones.

The oversubscribed round attracted significant attention from family offices and high-net-worth individuals, including repeat interest from existing investors as well as Board members.

The funding, which has a pre-money valuation of £5m, will allow BigSis to hit three key milestones for its first commercial solution, the control of Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD). A global pest, SWD attacks soft fruit and – despite using existing controls, costing up to £11,000 per hectare – yield loss can amount to thousands of pounds for every hectare grown.

The company uses the sterile insect technique (SIT), a proven tool where sterile males are released to mate with wild females and so reduce the pest population. SIT is in commercial use and widely recognised as the perfect solution for insect pest control since its conception more than 60 years ago. It is species-specific, non-toxic and not susceptible to resistance. However, the conventional SIT process is cost-intensive, making it uneconomical for most market sectors.

BigSis has developed an innovative automated production system, slashing the cost of SIT solutions by up to 90 per cent. Harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, the BigSis SIT platform raises insects individually, facilitating automated sex-sorting and targeted X-ray sterilisation that reduces the 'fitness penalty' on the released insects. Mass production is fully scalable, while remaining cost-effective at a local level. This enables micro-production units that can use local, native insects wherever a need is identified.

The Seed Plus round will allow BigSis to hit three key milestones for its SWD offer within nine months: finalising the first field-scale trial, which is in collaboration with a major UK berry grower; the completion of the pilot production line, allowing expanded field trials in 2022; and potential first sales, subject to trial results.

“Growers around the world have an urgent need for sustainable alternatives to chemical insecticides,” says Glen Slade, BigSis Founder and CEO. “Globally, the insect control market is worth over £18bn, with chemical control constituting more than two-thirds of that value.

“SIT accounts for just 1 per cent of that value at present, but it is technically capable of substituting the majority of chemical insecticide use. With affordable SIT solutions, BigSis expects to become a multi-billion pound crop protection company, addressing the ‘perfect storm’ faced by the world’s farmers – the combination of regulatory pressure on insecticides, consumer demand for ‘greener’ food, increased pest pressure as the climate warms, and the growing problem of insects’ resistance to chemical controls.

“What’s more, it’s a low-regulation control option, in contrast to other insect control tools. BigSis can currently sell in England and four US states, with zero regulatory cost and zero delay in securing approvals.”

The success of the Seed Plus round takes BigSis closer to its plans for a Series A round in the first half of 2022, supported by these important validations. Those funds will be used to expand production and internationalisation of the SWD solution, as well as progressing commercialisation of its next SIT solution, for codling moth, and developing a broader portfolio.

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#### NOTES TO EDITORS:

Use this Dropbox link to access and download hi-res photography to accompany this story: [https://bit.ly/BigSis\\_Oct\\_21](https://bit.ly/BigSis_Oct_21) (Captions and credits are in comments).

#### About BigSis ([www.bigsis.tech](http://www.bigsis.tech))

Founded in 2017, BigSis aims to provide the world’s farmers and growers with a viable, affordable and environmentally benign alternative to chemical insecticides.

Founder Glen Slade previously spent five years commercialising a GM SIT solution, before founding BigSis to develop individualised insect rearing. He then realised the opportunity to offer SIT by using computer vision to sex-sort and X-rays to sterilise the insects.

The BigSis system is protected by three patent filings, trade secret know-how and an ever-growing proprietary dataset. The company expects commercial sales of its SIT solution for SWD to begin within 12-18 months.