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PRESS RELEASE

Bloomberg UK names BigSis in its 25 ‘Startups to Watch’

READING, UK, 24th October 2023 - BigSis, the British agtech start-up offering robust yet chemical-free insect control solutions to farmers, has been named today as one of Bloomberg UK’s 25 Startups to Watch.

From more than 1,500 applications received, BigSis is one of just 25 startups to feature in the inaugural list compiled by Bloomberg. The financial and media company says the final selection represents the most innovative, new UK businesses: those that are growing fast, working on something truly unique, and which demonstrate their commitment to diversity.

“I’m truly thrilled by our inclusion as one of these 25 companies,” says BigSis Founder and CEO Glen Slade. “To have been selected from what was undoubtedly an impressive bank of entries is a great vote of confidence in the value of our work to reduce chemical insecticide usage and surely reflects BigSis’ unique and innovative approach to this problem.”

Founded in 2017, BigSis has harnessed AI and robotics in its quest to help farmers control insect pests without the use of harmful pesticides. Its in-house technology (Slade has a computer science degree from Cambridge and 25 years’ experience in agribusiness) has automated the individualised rearing of sterile male insects as a means to produce millions of them. These can be released into a crop, where they mate with wild females, which then produce no offspring. This prevents the rapid increase in pest populations that leads to crop damage. Farmers will subscribe to a season-long service, with BigSis taking care of insect releases and crop monitoring.

“The beauty of our system is that it’s species-specific, non-toxic, non-GMO, and demands minimal regulation,” notes Slade. “Despite its minimal impact on the environment, BigSis solutions are capable of outperforming chemical insecticides in many agricultural and horticultural crops, with further opportunities in pest control for public health.”

BigSis partnered with Berry Gardens, the UK’s largest berry supplier, and the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) in early field trials to prove the technology worked against Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD), an invasive fruit fly. Introducing the sterile male insects reduced SWD

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populations in strawberries by as much as 91% compared to untreated plots. This year, trials in raspberries showed up to 88% reduction in SWD populations compared to plots treated with one spray of a chemical insecticide.

The clear success of the company's trials has caught investors' attention. BigSis Series A closed over-subscribed in November 2022 at £4.5m, with the round led by the specialist agricultural innovation fund Regenerate Ventures. BigSis is currently raising £3m to replicate its production system to treat up to nine times more hectares in 2024 compared to 2023; most of this is pre-ordered.

The company's current production plant is located within its headquarters in Reading, Berkshire, but the individualised insect rearing technology was designed to be easily scaled up by replicating the processing units. BigSis' business model is to build its automated production facilities in each country or state where there is demand.

"This ties to our strategy to minimise environmental impact, which has the important benefit of minimising regulatory hurdles," says Slade. "While most life sciences companies spend millions of pounds and many years pursuing regulatory approvals, our solutions are so safe that they need no permit for commercial sales in England; the same is true for four US states."

BigSis is already developing solutions for other crop pests. "There's enormous scope for our solutions in crops worldwide," says Slade. "As regulatory pressure increases on chemical insecticides, we aim to facilitate producers to pivot towards regenerative practices and meet consumers' demand for 'greener' food."

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About BigSis (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 'sterile insect technique' solution, before founding BigSis to develop individualised rearing of conventionally bred insects. 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 started commercial sales of its SIT solution for SWD in 2023.