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New exhibitors present new products and technologies at Fruit Focus

New products and technologies are continually being developed for horticulture and this year’s Fruit Focus event presented some of these innovations to fruit growers. Rachel Anderson reports.

data. In addition to connecting growers to their crops, growers can connect with team members and trusted experts outside of their business. A pest expert from the USA can now diagnose and advise, in real-time, problems from customers around the world. Digital knowledge sharing is now possible, thus removing one of the largest barriers in agriculture - proximity and distance.”

Agri-Tech Services and the University of Hertfordshire

The University of Hertfordshire has developed a Strawberry Powdery Mildew prediction model that is available only on Agri-Tech’s soft-fruit platform. Dr Avice Hall, principal lecturer at the University, revealed that the development of the web-based, real-time prediction mode is currently being funded by a grant from the Ceres Trust. She added that it is being trialled on nine farms this year. “The aim is to control the disease substantially with fewer fungicide sprays, and it enables people to make better use of available chemistry. On average, we have [helped growers] to save five or six sprays per year.” She added that the cost benefit in 2018 was £250/ha.

Agri-Tech Services’ managing director, Simon Turner, told The Fruit Grower that the firm has a new app developed specifically for substrate irrigation management. “We think this is the first of its kind.” He noted that the app is not sensor-based. Rather, growers simply log any data relating to the plant, such as run-off, water, feed and climate, into the app. They can then view the collected data on their smart phones and analyse it before making any decision relating to their crop.

Furthermore, the University of Hertfordshire’s revealed that the University has been carrying out work over the last ten years on the use of bio-available silicon nutrients. The research has highlighted the beneficial effects of silicon on strawberries, including the fact that it reduces the fruit’s susceptibility to strawberry powdery mildew. The use of silicon delays the start of an epidemic by eight to 14 days when regularly used as a nutrient via the fertigation tubes or foliar application. Growers wishing to see the effects of silicon on their fruit crops can purchase the product - Sion - from Engage Agro Europe.

The University’s representatives were also keen to promote its new MSc in Sustainable Planning and Environmental management, which starts this September.