The new range comes from another Italian company, Union BIO, with whom Bleu Line signed an exclusive distribution agreement in July 2014. This gives Bleu Line the rights to distribute Union BIO products in the pest control sector, globally.

Importantly, and unlike many products, marketed as natural, the Union BIO range is based on detailed scientific research to prove effectiveness. Whilst it is unlikely they can replace modern synthetic chemical controls completely, as part of an integrated treatment, and in specific situations, they do have potential.

Union Bio has made its name in the animal health world – indeed it was the company’s own vet, Paola Zintu, who explained how the products have been developed. All are based on essential oils extracted from a partner company’s factory in Bolivia. According to Paola, what makes them stand apart from other similar products is the use of an exclusive, patented synergist, developed by Union BIO. Matrice UB is extracted from the European olive tree and, added to combinations of medicinal plants in aqueous solution or oil gel, it has been shown to enhance activity and reliability.

Union Bio was established 15 years ago in the year 2000 by two women, Ersilia Ferrini and Luana Ghiandai, to develop and market the natural products resulting from the research from their sister company Chimica, set-up in the 1980s. The two also run an inter-cultural organisation, ANT.ER.LUX ONLUS, that supports growth in developing countries. All three organisations now operate as part of Gruppo Labor.

From the beginning, the two women have advocated a different approach, stepping back from exploiting nature and natural resources and trying to learn from nature to find natural solutions. However, with scientific backgrounds, they have put science at the heart of their operations and clearly understand the need to verify product efficacy and to operate to high standards of quality control within the manufacturing process.

The company’s laboratories work closely with leading Italian universities in Siena, Pisa, Ferrara and Padova to obtain independent verification of their own trials.
In turn, the Bleu Line Group is now trialling them with pest control servicing businesses as part of an integrated approach.

Production is via the partner company, Phytosalud, established in 2006, in Bolivia. It is based in rural Cochabamba, where the local scientific team is supported by Union BIO’s R&D expertise. Plants are harvested at their peak to ensure the highest concentration of active ingredients and processed using modern extraction technology. Bolivia is rich in natural biodiversity and this, combined with the plant knowledge of the Bolivian people and a scientific approach, ensures a consistent quality for the essential oils extracted.

The range of natural products produced by Union BIO is vast with preparations for cats, dogs, horses, livestock and the environment/public health pest control. The latter includes products to deter or repel flies, spiders, reptiles, mosquitoes, rats, mice, moles and ants.

None of the products are designed to kill the pests. This means that they need to be applied regularly, providing service contract opportunities for pest management businesses and, of course, as they are all based on natural plant extracts they will also meet clients’ green aspirations. As the UK is, thankfully, not particularly bothered by mosquitoes or venomous reptiles or spiders, there are currently three products most relevant to the UK market. These are:

- Rodi NaturalStop – a rodent repellent
- Talpa NaturalStop – a mole repellent
- For.mica NaturalStop – an ant repellent

Rodi is available as a ready-to-use liquid or oil gel formulation which the company says are suitable for treating food manufacturing and storage areas, as well as agricultural barns and stables. The product is designed to exploit rodents’ highly developed sense of smell and their habit of digging long and shallow tunnels.

Talpa is available as a ready-to-use oil-gel formulation. The company says it creates a foul odour that is unbearable to moles and also to the worms and insects they eat.

For.mica, again in an oil-gel, ready-to-use formulation, is suitable for use in the food industry, in private residences and in all indoor environments frequented by people or pets such as restaurants, hotels, schools and leisure centres. The company says it produces an olfactory impassable barrier to keep the ants away and at the same time releases a fragrance that people find pleasant.

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Giving customers what they want

There is good business to be had in satisfying demand for greener pest control. In the presentation Union BIO stressed the company’s ethos that natural is best and emphasised that their products are non-toxic to animals, humans and the environment. The company literature also stresses that none of the products contain chemicals. Maybe something was lost in translation and it should read ‘synthetic chemicals’ as, clearly, natural plant extracts are also chemical compounds.

Either way, let’s not forget that natural does not necessarily mean safe. In fact all chemicals are harmful under some conditions and harmless under others. It’s the dose that makes the poison. Some of the most toxic substances we know are entirely natural. For example, aflatoxins, fungi that can grow on a variety of foods, are highly toxic, cyanide is an entirely natural chemical, common salt is essential for life but just 60g can kill a child.

Not that there’s anything to suggest that the Union BIO products are in any way harmful. As natural products they are outside the scope of the EU Biocides Regulation so they do not have to jump through all the regulatory hoops that, say a new man-made insecticide, would have to. That’s good news if you have customers who might like to try these products as there is no reason why they can’t be sold here in the UK. At present there is no UK distributor appointed, so if you’re interested in trying them, contact the Bleu Line Group. Email: bleuline@bleuline.it

Natural mosquito control

The Bleu Line Group is getting something of a reputation for marketing greener products. It recently announced that Aquatain AMF, a liquid mosquito film has been declared formally exempt from registration as a biocide in the European Union. This is because the Commission has accepted that the action of Aquatain is purely physical.

Aquatain AMF is a silicone-based liquid which spreads across the surface of standing water forming a very thin film. The low surface tension of the film prevents mosquito larvae and pupae from breathing at the surface, causing them to drown. The film remains effective for around four weeks. Its efficacy and safety have been demonstrated in many independent trials around the world. With the recent EU exemption the product is now approved for sale in more than 50 countries across all continents.

Aquatain is now available in the UK through Barrettine, see page 41.