

Media release

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fenaco and crop.zone agree on strategic collaboration and develop an innovative and sustainable method of weed control

crop.zone's sustainable and targeted methods of weed control reduce the use of plant protection products. The innovative technology controls weeds with an electrical charge. It is being introduced, tested and further developed in Switzerland for the first time by fenaco. This gives farmers a competitive and sustainable alternative method of weed control.

The leading Swiss cooperative fenaco and the German tech start-up crop.zone have concluded a cooperation agreement. This collaboration aims to support Swiss farmers with innovative and sustainable plant protection solutions from crop.zone, reducing the use of plant protection products. The technology was developed by crop.zone, while fenaco is taking on responsibility for introducing it onto the Swiss market and adapting the solution to the conditions there. As part of the collaboration, the weed control solutions from crop.zone are being brought into use for the first time in Switzerland. Their use on Swiss fields will be under scientific supervision. In addition, farmers interested in doing so will have the opportunity to try out the new technology under real conditions.

Within the framework of the cooperation contract, Michael Feitknecht, Head of Plant Production and member of the Board of Management at fenaco, is taking a seat on the advisory board of crop.zone and advising the start-up on strategic issues.

Dirk Vandenhirtz, CEO of crop.zone, says, "We are very happy about the collaboration with the leading agricultural farmers' cooperative in Switzerland. It gives us excellent access to a large number of farms. For us, the opportunity to bring our technologies to Switzerland is strategically significant."

Michael Feitknecht, Head of Plant Production and member of the Board of Management at fenaco, says, "The technology from crop.zone gives us a new tool and embodies our principle 'Combination is the new innovation'. fenaco collaborates with start-ups which are developing innovative and sustainable technologies for agriculture. Switzerland is assuming a leading position worldwide by making farming more sustainable and is playing a crucial role in that."

Innovative methods of weed control

The technology from crop.zone kills weeds with an electrical charge, creating an innovative and sustainable method of weed control. The width of application is up to twelve metres. With a speed of spread of 4 km an hour, the crop.zone solution can treat around 3 hectares an hour. The crops are pre-

treated, in an initial step, with a conductive liquid. The weeds are then killed in a targeted way through an electrical charge. This means that energy consumption is lower and the method is much more effective than other electrical technologies. The Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) is, at present, clarifying whether the procedure can be authorised for organic farming.

With this new weed control solution, fenaco and crop.zone offer a safe, reliable and environmentally-friendly alternative that makes Swiss agriculture more sustainable. At the same time, they are increasing the yield and profitability of farms. The method will be presented to the public for the first time at the opening of the new beneficial organisms production facility in Aesch (BL) in spring 2021.

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About crop.zone

crop.zone GmbH was founded in 2019. It unites an experienced team with a broad background in the sectors of agricultural engineering, start-ups, development, licensing and authorisation. The objective of crop.zone is to develop new methods as alternatives to conventional plant protection and offer them commercially. At present, crop.zone has 16 employees. It works at the high-tech Aachen site in cooperation with the RWTH Aachen University on developing the latest methods and applications for agriculture. As well as the harvest preparation of agricultural crops such as potatoes, these also include no-plough field preparation and use in speciality crops. Currently, crop.zone is operating in Holland, Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland.

www.crop.zone

About the fenaco cooperative

fenaco is a farming cooperative society based on a century-old concept. It is owned by 183 LANDIs and their approximately 44,000 members, including almost 23,000 active Swiss farmers. As a marketing partner for agricultural products, fenaco ensures that high-quality Swiss foodstuffs (fruit, vegetables, potatoes, cereals, meat and beverages) reach customers. As a supplier, fenaco also offers a wide range of products and services to ensure sustainable, efficient and market-oriented agriculture. Among the best-known fenaco brands is the beverage manufacturer RAMSEIER Suisse, the meat processor Ernst Sutter, the retailers Volg and LANDI, the fertilizer retailer LANDOR, the feed manufacturer UFA and the energy provider AGROLA. Headquartered in Berne, the fenaco cooperative employs over 10 000 people and achieved net sales of CHF 7 billion in 2019.

www.fenaco.com