

Grossdietwil, 14 November 2023

35 years of Andermatt – Interview with Isabel and Martin Andermatt

Isabel and Martin Andermatt, you founded Andermatt Biocontrol 35 years ago. Innovative farmers and eco-friendly garden enthusiasts were the first customers. Since then, the Andermatt group established numerous new companies for various markets and market segments. To manufacture your first product Madex® against the fruit maggot, you had to set up mass production of the codling moth.

Questions for Isabel Andermatt

Isabel, why did you take part back then?

I've been fascinated by entomology since I was a teenager. Caterpillars and butterflies were my hobby.

What made you decide to give up your profession as a vet?

There was simply no room for being a vet alongside being a mother and this research and development work. We didn't want to use chemicals to treat our own apples. We knew from literature that codling moth granulosis virus was an option.

What key moment do you remember?

The approval of our first product Madex® at the end of 1987 was a big moment. The first approval of a granulosis virus product worldwide!

What happened next?

The pleasing demand for the first product encouraged us to produce further biological plant protection solutions based on beneficial organisms and nematodes.

Why do you consider biological plant protection important?

Biological plant protection protects biodiversity, soil and drinking water and does not jeopardise our health.

What are your hopes for the future?

In Switzerland, we have been able to make a decisive contribution to making plant protection more environmentally friendly with our comprehensive range. Now we are active worldwide. I hope that we can also replace thousands of tonnes of agro-chemicals in the major agricultural countries.

Questions for Martin Andermatt

Martin, what was your motivation for founding Andermatt Biocontrol?

I am convinced that chemistry in plant protection is the wrong approach. The market for organic products was too small for the established crop protection companies at the time. It was big enough for us as a start-up.

Which situation do you remember in particular?

In the first few years, our products were only appreciated by organic farms. Today, we generate two thirds of our turnover with conventional farms.

Which moments were not easy?

The market for organic plant protection has grown continuously. In order not to lose market share, we had to grow. The strong growth was very challenging, but also very exciting.

What do you think is particularly important for today's success?

We inform our customers openly about our services, but also about the limitations of our products. That creates trust. The megatrends of "organic" and "sustainability" have also helped, as have the various scandals involving chemical pesticides.

What are your current concerns regarding Andermatt Biocontrol Suisse?

The Swiss registration authorities are completely overloaded. As a result, new solutions only come onto the market after a delay of several years. The Release Ordinance prevents the propagation and release of natural enemies of important new pests, such as the cherry vinegar fly. It urgently needs to be adapted!

What are your hopes for the future?

Biological plant protection is already well established in Switzerland. In many other countries, chemicals are still used almost exclusively, even those that have long been banned here. We are also heavily involved in Africa and South America and hope to be able to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity there too.

What does your succession plan look like?

We are selling the Andermatt Group to our employees. Many of the more than 500 employees are already co-owners.

What else would you like to tell us?

The basis of our great success is the valuable groundwork at universities and research institutes and the dedicated commitment of all our employees. We would like to thank and recognise them all!

The interview was conducted by Monika Sidler, Head of Marketing Switzerland.