British Sugar Launches Innovative Pollinator Monitoring Initiative to Boost On-Farm Biodiversity

June 24, 2025

British Sugar, the sole processor of the UK's sugar beet crop, today announced the launch of a pioneering project to implement high-tech acoustic sensors for real-time pollinator monitoring across a large farming estate in North Norfolk. This initiative, the first of its kind for the UK sugar beet industry, aims to transform on-farm biodiversity and gather crucial insights into pollinator health.

The pilot program, set to run until 2027, will see 27 advanced acoustic sensors, developed by AgriSound, deployed to collect continuous data on bee and insect activity over a two-year period. At the core of this project is AgriSound's proprietary Polly™ technology, a scalable and automated system designed to detect and analyze insect movement through acoustic monitoring.

The data generated will be shared with the participating grower, Ali Cargill, British Sugar, and other key stakeholders, informing strategic decisions regarding land use and biodiversity management. Furthermore, the monitoring will assess the impact of various landscape features, including wildflower margins, hedgerows, and water sources, on pollinator activity over time.

British Sugar anticipates that the findings from this project will provide valuable insights into the interaction between sugar beet crop rotation—a significant component of farming systems in the East of England, East Midlands, and Yorkshire—and the well-being of pollinator populations.

Charlie Curtis, Agricultural Sustainability Manager at British Sugar, emphasized the strategic importance of

the project. “This initiative represents a significant leap forward in our long-term commitment to enhancing biodiversity across our agricultural operations,” said Curtis. “We have actively sought to adapt our practices to become more sustainable and supportive of UK biodiversity, and our partnership with AgriSound was a natural alignment. By gaining a deeper understanding of pollinator activity, we can make more informed decisions regarding land use, pesticide management, and the establishment of nature-friendly habitats.”

The project’s primary objective is to identify specific bee species present on the farm and analyze their interactions with both crops and surrounding wildflower margins. This will establish a clear baseline of activity that can be progressively enhanced and built upon year-on-year.

Casey Woodward, Founder and CEO of AgriSound, underscored the critical role of real-time data in driving environmental progress. “British Sugar’s leadership in piloting real-time pollinator monitoring will yield invaluable information to support data-driven decision-making for farmers on how to manage their land to protect pollinators and biodiversity,” Woodward stated. “It is imperative that more businesses and producers adopt real-time monitoring of pollinator activity at their sites to bolster the protection of our vital ecosystems across the UK.”