

Determining an economic damage threshold for pollen beetles, *Meligethes spp.*

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Pollen beetles (*Meligethes aeneus* and *M. viridescens*) are important pests in oilseed rape crops. Swiss farmers are frequently making 1-3 insecticide applications during spring season to keep the pests below economically damaging levels. Farmers enrolled in the national program on ecological production must consider published threshold densities (3-5 beetles per plant depending on plant stage) when deciding on whether to apply insecticides.

Recently, however, agricultural experts have expressed doubts on whether the current threshold values remain valid, given that agricultural practices and market prices have changed considerably over the years. In response, Agroscope together with the School of Agriculture have started a research project aiming to re-assess the economic injury level of pollen beetles (among other pest insects) under present-day conditions. In collaboration with local farmers, a large number of field experiments comparing yield in insecticide-treated and control plots are being performed all over Switzerland for 3-4 years. Experimental setup, pest monitoring and yield assessments are organised and supervised by the cantonal extension services. This broad involvement of the major agricultural players should increase awareness and acceptance of economic thresholds as an important tool of integrated pest management.