York's AgriSound secures £75k funding to pilot insect listening tech

A innovative firm that uses acoustic technology and environmental sensors to assess the activity of pollinating insects has secured £75,000 funding to trial its technology.

York's AgriSound has won the backing of Tesco and WWF to implement its process with one of the supermarket's fruit suppliers based in Cambridgeshire. Using its bio-acoustic listening devices called Polly, the firm can detect insects and give growers data that allows them to make decisions that can increase the yield of crops, reduce costs and improve biodiversity.

As part of the Innovation Connections accelerator programme, AgriSound's trial in AM Fresh's fruit orchards is part of a wider ambition to reduce the environmental impact of food production and enhance the resilience of the food supply chain. The programme pairs start-ups with Tesco suppliers in a bid to fast-track innovation.

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Casey Woodward, founder and CEO of AgriSound, said: "At a time when biodiversity, including pollinating bee populations, is declining rapidly and the cost of food production is soaring, winning this funding from Tesco and the WWF is a great achievement for our young company. It is exciting to be able to introduce our technology to the Tesco fruit supply chain to help growers encourage pollinators to the right areas at the right time is boosting yields, without the need for additional fertilisers or pesticides.

"We are looking forward to showcasing the technology to the wider Tesco supplier base and helping farm businesses to streamline biodiversity monitoring and promote nature inclusive farming practises. Our Polly device operates in a similar way to how a smart speaker functions.

"The device is equipped with a microphone and environmental sensors, measuring temperature, light and humidity. Each one is completely solar powered. Polly listens 24/7 for the sounds of insects and uses advanced sound-analysis to translate the data into activity scores.

"These are automatically sent back to the cloud, where the farmer or food producer can view them via an app or web application. This information, available in real time, can be used to target the introduction of pollinator-protection measures to the areas of greatest need, and also determine actions such as the planting of wildflowers or creating new habitats."

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