

Editorial

My first exposure to a large insect mass rearing facility was in a place called Manoa, in Oahu, one of the Hawaiian Islands in 1994. The Tephritid fruit flies and its parasitoids were reared in large numbers for biological control. Subsequently, I have seen such facilities for fruit flies, especially for sterile insect releases, in Stellenbosch (S.Africa), in Valencia (Spain) etc. To keep breeding population of even a single insect going on in large volume is indeed a professional enterprise. If sterile insect technique (SIT) and bio-control are to succeed, such mass rearing insect houses in huge volume of high output capacity is an absolutely must.

Recently, I was in Mannuthy Trichur of Kerala District, where a state government facility for mass rearing *Trichogramma* exists, mainly to cater to the rice growers of Kerala. About 25 acres of rice is grown without a drop of insecticide thanks to these insect rearing houses. Others need to ape this model. There are other facilities elsewhere in India but on a smaller scale, mainly in the Agricultural Universities or Indian Council of Agricultural Research Institutes. But the need of the hour is to enthuse private entrepreneurs to take over, as is vogue in Israel, Europe and other developed agrarian societies. One of the main ingredients is not only to know insects, but to love them! This love, combined with science is what has enabled the success of bio-control of weeds and pests like *Salvinia*, papaya mealy bug, borers in rice, sugarcane, cotton, etc. On the flip side, love and commerce combine in running our sericulture, apiculture, lac industry etc. The crux of the issue is that we need large insect rearing houses for several beneficial insects in large numbers. This comes when science, commerce and love for insects converge in a triangular whole. This is all the more pertinent when insects are viewed all over the world as future food for animals and mankind.

(Abraham Verghese)

Hon'ble Editor.