



Insects replace fertilizer in raspberry cultivation

Growers can increase raspberry production by using ecosystem services instead of fertilizer, according to research by the Plant Ecology & Nature Conservation chair group.

The Wageningen researchers grew raspberries under a range of different conditions, with variations in pollination by insects, the organic matter in the soil and the application of artificial fertilizer. Insect pollination increased yields by 33 per cent and led to raspberries that were 11 per cent heavier. Higher soil organic matter attracted more insects and resulted in berries that were

Insect pollination increased yields by 33 per cent and berry weight by 11 per cent

berries that were 20 per cent heavier, but it did not increase yields. Adding fertilizer increased yields and the

weight of the fruits but had no effect on insect pollination or the amount of organic matter in the soil.

The researchers conclude that growers can use pollination by insects and soil organic matter to reduce the use of artificial fertilizer without harming production. This will let the growers reduce the impact of food production on the environment. According to the authors, this is the first study to measure the interactions between insects, soil quality and fertilizer in food production. They published their findings in the journal *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment*. ^{AS}