

Bees prove fertile territory for local electronics design firm.

“Christchurch Star” December 17, 2003

Christchurch based electronics design firm EDAC is on a roll, with recent sales breaking multi-million dollar targets.

Sales revenue and staff count for the company has doubled in the past financial year and is predicted to double again in 2004.

Niche products they have developed such as beeFORCE, are proving to have international market potential.

Last month EDAC Electronics and business partner Geoff Willacy of beeFORCE were highly commended at the Westpac Hi Tech Awards for the Most Innovative Product award and the Biotechnology Company of the Year award.

BeeFORCE bee pollinator technology dusts bees with pollen and increases their efficiency as nature's pollinators in kiwifruit orchards.

It is an environmentally friendly alternative to spraying that is programmed to deliver small volumes of beneficial products to the entrance of a beehive so that honeybees can take them up as they fly off to pollinate flowers.

Field trials have already proved successful with selected trichoderma for the control of sclerotinia infection that plagues kiwifruit, and fire blight inoculant for apples and pears. Other biological agents are also being researched, making bees a forceful army against bacterial and fungal attack on crops.

EDAC project manager Henry Bettle said: “With increasing aversion to widespread aerial spraying, the possibilities for beeFORCE is unlimited, as the bees target the plants directly with minimal affect to the environment and themselves. The horticultural industry is really excited about it.”