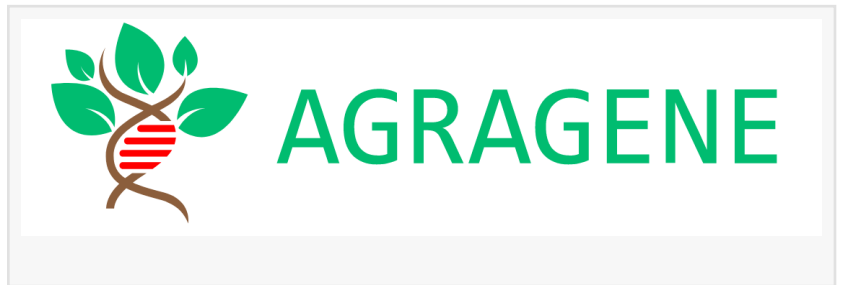


# Aragene announces another funding round after relocation to St. Louis

*BioGenerator leads \$2M funding round with Ospraie Ag Science to scale to commercialization*

ST. LOUIS, MO, USA, March 20, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Aragene](#), Inc., a sustainable agricultural technology

company developing novel biological crop pest protection products, announced today that it has raised \$2 million in an A2 financing round. The funding round led by [BioGenerator](#), a venture capital firm that invests exclusively in St. Louis companies, will expand field trials and



commercialization of Aragene's eco-friendly alternatives to synthetic pesticides. [Ospraie Ag Science](#) (OAS), the venture arm of New York-based Ospraie Management, a commodities and basic industries firm, also participated in this funding round after leading seed rounds for the company.

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In a tighter market for venture capital, this funding is a strong vote of confidence in our novel technology and business model. This investment will accelerate field trials and commercialization.”

*Bryan Witherbee, CEO  
Aragene*

“As global momentum builds for sustainable pest control solutions, this investment will accelerate field trials and commercialization of pesticide-free alternatives,” said Aragene CEO Bryan Witherbee. “In a tighter market for venture capital, this funding is a strong vote of confidence in our novel technology and business model. We are

thrilled.”

“Biogenerator Ventures is excited to have helped attract and be an investor in Aragene,” said BioGenerator Ventures Managing Director Matt Helms. “This is further evidence of the growing reputation of the region as fertile ground for talent to help agriculture focused startups grow.”

Aragene's CRISPR-based technology engineers sterile male crop pests that mate with wild females, producing no eggs and naturally eradicating the population. The applications are safe for bees, birds and workers. The first pest targeted is the Spotted Wing Drosophila, a virulent and invasive fly that has caused more than \$700 million in damage to fruit harvests across the country.

The funding comes on the heels of the company's relocation from San Diego, where higher costs of equipment, facilities and personnel stifled growth. Given the strength of the underlying technology, the strong demand for biopesticides and an exclusive worldwide license on the intellectual property, OAS tapped its network to explore the move. St. Louis-based biotech executive Bryan Witherbee stepped into the new role, relocating the firm to the Helix Center and ensuring Agragene's biologist could move with the company – and its valuable cargo of sterilized flies.

The move significantly reduced the company's burn rate, extending the annual financial runway by several months each year. Agragene has regrown the company in St. Louis from a biologist, a CEO and a room of flies to a staff of eight (including full-time and contracted workers) who have hit testing milestones for achieving sterility.

OAS Senior Agricultural Partner Carl Casale credited the St. Louis agtech scene for supporting the company with its welcoming, affordable, collaborative and innovative environment.

"Without the support of the St. Louis tech and financial community, this company would not exist today," Casale said of the relocation. "Coastal tech companies should take a second look at St. Louis. It has been a perfect fit for this company. We look forward to working with Agragene as it helps farmers do more with less environmental impact."

Agragene has raised \$7.2 million to date.



The Spotted Wing Drosophila causes millions in damage to fruit harvests each year



Emilie Saa, research associate, and Stephanie Gamez, director of R&D, prepare to add Spotted Wing Drosophila flies into an insect cage.

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#### About Agragene

Aragene is the smart choice for organic and conventional biological crop pest control. Using advanced CRISPR-based genome engineering Agragene creates eco-friendly products that are applicable to thousands of insect pests worldwide. Agragene's initial product targets spotted wing drosophila, a major global crop pest. Founded in 2017, the company is pursuing commercial product launch in the United States and an aggressive licensing strategy worldwide. Learn more at [agragene.com](http://agragene.com) and follow us on LinkedIn.

#### About BioGenerator Ventures

BioGenerator Ventures, the investment arm of BioSTL, creates, builds, and invests in companies that are solving important problems in healthcare and agriculture. For additional information, visit [www.biogeneratorventures.com](http://www.biogeneratorventures.com).

#### About Ospraie Ag Science

Ospraie Ag Science LLC (OAS) identifies solutions to help farmers "Do More With Less." By increasing profitability, improving quality-adjusted yield and reducing environmental impact, our companies not only benefit producers but generate smarter, healthier and more efficient food for consumers globally. Utilizing our extensive network and 25 years of experience investing in agriculture, OAS is positioned to help farmers achieve a sustainable future.

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Aragene

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