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BioClusters News

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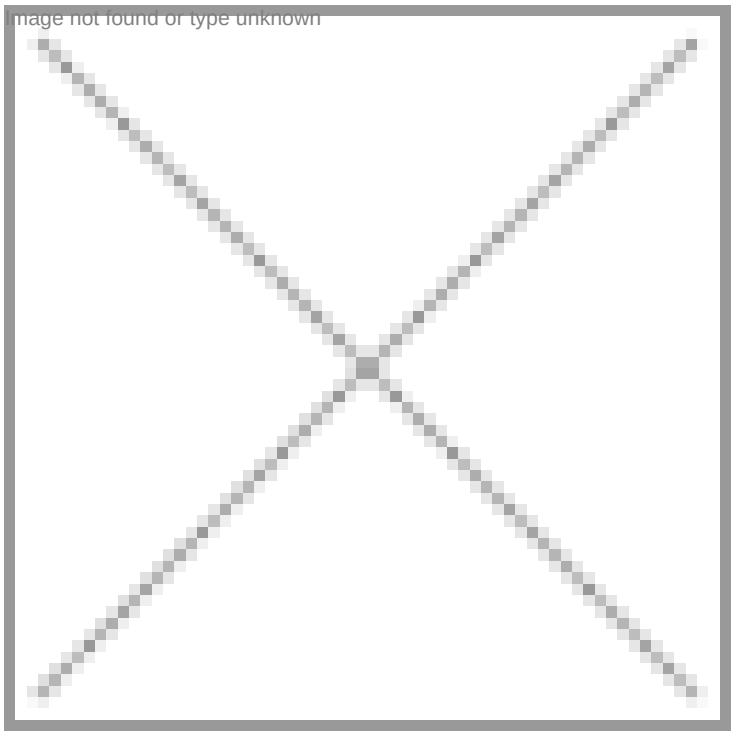

EU industry hails Parliament hearing on Green Biotech

On the 10th anniversary of safe and sustainable farming with green biotechnology, EuropaBio, the European Association for Bioindustries, with 60 direct members operating worldwide and 25 national biotechnology associations representing some 1,500 small and medium sized enterprises has hailed the European Parliament's public hearing: Biotechnology: Prospects and Challenges for Agriculture in Europe.

EuropaBio strongly supports fora such as the Parliamentary hearing that look to examine the arguments for and against GM farming in a methodical, sensible fashion, using science-based research to drive the discussion.

GM crops approved following rigorous safety assessments have been grown around the world commercially for 10 years. They have been consumed for over 10 years with not one single recorded negative health incident. Currently, biotech crops are grown in five EU countries (Czech Rep, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain). The evidence is that European countries and public opinion are increasingly less negative and more open to biotech crops. Yet small minorities of member states are trying to block the growth in acceptance of biotech crops in Europe and deny European consumers and farmers the choice to use labeled, safe products.

In an increasingly globalized and competitive world, EuropaBio believes it is important to encourage companies to bring innovative products to market for the benefit of both farmers and consumers. The future competitiveness of Europe's agricultural and food processing industries will depend on plant genomics, biotechnology and their smart application.

Europe's position in this arena is declining as a consequence of the political inertia caused by the polarized and increasingly heated debate between opponents
and advocates.

Source: www.europabio.org

Malaysia's Biotech Council approves Biosafety Act

Malaysia's National Biosafety-Biotechnology Council approved the Biosafety Act in a meeting chaired by the prime minister, Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, and attended by cabinet members who discussed the implications of the Act on the country's biotechnology industry. The Biosafety Act is expected to complete the National Biotechnology Policy, which aims to regulate the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). It is expected to be discussed in Parliament this November.

In related developments, the proposal to set up a National Biosafety Board will also be tackled in Parliament next year. The Board will be responsible for approving the import and export of biological products. In addition, a Genetic Modification Advisory Committee comprising scientists will be formed to assist the Board in implementing policies.

Source: www.bic.org.my

Industry calls for patient-centered healthcare system

EuropaBio has strongly supported the far-reaching initiative taken by the EU Commission and the member states to address the competitiveness of the European-based bio-pharmaceutical industry that will benefit patients and society.

Dr Andrea Rappagliosi, chairman of EuropaBio Healthcare Council, urged, "Timely access to innovative medicines should be granted within a framework of investment needed for adequate coverage. Not only is the future of more than 2000 young European small and medium life science companies at risk, but also the future development of their research projects that specifically address healthcare benefit to patients."

EuropaBio calls for the creation of similar platforms in member states. This will support the debate fostered by the pharmaceutical forum that will develop specific proposals to ensure that patients across Europe benefit equally from European biotech innovation.

The healthcare biotech industry not only contributes to the progress in medicine, but also to advancements in the knowledge and science underlying life-threatening diseases and their causes.

Source: www.europabio.org

New Zealand's Ministry of Health issues guidelines on use of stem cells

Guidelines on the use of cells from established human embryonic stem cell lines for research have been published by New Zealand's Ministry of Health. In November last year the ministry released a discussion document on the guidelines for public consultation. The deadline for written submissions closed on March 3, 2006 and the proposed guidelines were reviewed in light of submissions received.

The guidelines will allow New Zealand researchers to use cells from established hESC lines in research with a number of restrictions, including mandatory ethical review of hESC research applications.

The ministry noted that the guidelines will be reviewed following the outcome of the Advisory Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology's consideration and public consultation on the research use of human embryos in New Zealand, including their use to derive stem cell lines, in the second half of 2006.

Source: www.nzbio.org.nz

DTI indicates £7.5 million funding for bioscience, healthcare activities

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Government of United Kingdom, has indicated £7.5 million funding and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) £1 million funding, through the Collaborative R&D program for bioscience and healthcare, for technologies for development and manufacture of biopharmaceuticals.

Development and manufacturing of biopharmaceuticals poses particular technical challenges and the expansion of the global market for biopharmaceuticals is creating a significant opportunity for the UK's expertise in bioprocessing.

According to a release, proposals are sought for collaborative R&D projects which will develop novel technologies that would reduce the time to clinic or market of new biopharmaceuticals and/or lead to more cost efficient processes for the development and manufacture of protein therapeutics, monoclonal antibodies, vaccines and gene therapies. These may be: industry-oriented basic research; or applied R&D projects; or experimental development (technology validation) projects; and involve science-to-business (S2B) or business-to business (B2B) interactions.

Commenting on the funding, Tony Bradshaw, director, bioProcessUK, managed as a stand-alone business unit of the BioIndustry Association (BIA) said, "This injection of funding will help to ensure that bioscience research discoveries become the innovative technologies to develop the biopharmaceutical medicines of the future. The Collaborative R&D funding complements the recent funding of academic research by the Bioprocessing Research Industry Club. The funding is an indication of the significant commitment to the importance of bioprocessing as part of the drug development process."

Source: www.bioindustry.org

Over 20,000 people work in biotech industry in Germany

In total, 480 enterprises in Germany are substantially or exclusively active in biotechnology, in accordance with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition (dedicated biotech firms). For a further 59 companies, modern biotechnology is a field of activity or business existing alongside others (innovative biotech firms). Included in this group are, above all, pharma and chemical companies and/or seeds manufacturers. Fourteen of the 480 dedicated biotech firms, or 2.7 percent, were listed on the stock market in 2005, according to a survey conducted by biotechnologie.de.

The biotechnologie.de is a portal commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to carry out a biotechnology company survey within Germany, based on the OECD guidelines, making this the first reliable description of the German biotech industry that allows valid comparisons to be made with other countries.

The survey shows that approximately 24,000 people are employed in the sector of commercial biotechnology. Of these, approximately 13,000 are working within the 480 dedicated biotech enterprises. Less than half of these employees (45 percent) have university-level qualifications.

According to the survey the number of employees in individual companies shows that small companies make up the majority of the German biotech industry. A good 88 percent of the companies employ less than 50. Scarcely 48 percent have between 10 and 49 employees, with 40 percent having only 1 to 9 employees. Only 7 percent of all enterprises employ between 50 and 99. Just 4.5 percent of the 480 dedicated biotech enterprises have more than 100 employees and only one percent employ more than 249.

Source: www.biotechnologie.de

Biofuel production may become an issue in 2006 election: BIO Survey

Four in five US adults (80 percent) strongly or somewhat agree that national and state governments are not doing enough to promote production of biofuels-fuels made from agricultural crops or plant matter, according to a new survey released by the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO).

The survey, conducted by Harris Interactive, also found that 82 percent of adults say national and state governments should provide financial incentives to biofuels producers to encourage the production and availability of biofuels. More than two out

of three adults (69%) would use American-made biofuels even if these fuels cost slightly more than conventional gas. And more than eight of every 10 (84 percent) say they would be at least somewhat likely to support federal and state political candidates who favor providing incentives to promote increased production and availability of biofuels throughout the US.

Jim Greenwood, president and CEO of BIO, said, "Developing domestic biofuels and ending our over-reliance on foreign oil appear to be top concerns among Americans in this election year, our survey finds. Reducing dependence on oil and lessening environmental impacts are important to our nation's future economic growth and competitiveness. A strong majority of Americans clearly support federal and state financial incentives to promote development of biofuels such as ethanol that can help end our addiction to oil. And they are ready to support political candidates who favor such incentives."

He further said, "We see support for continuing and expanding existing tax credits and other biofuels production incentives. Next year, Congress will have the opportunity to fund advanced research and provide additional incentives that will help build a growing biofuel industry that will continue to enhance our national security and create new jobs going forward."

Source: www.bio.org