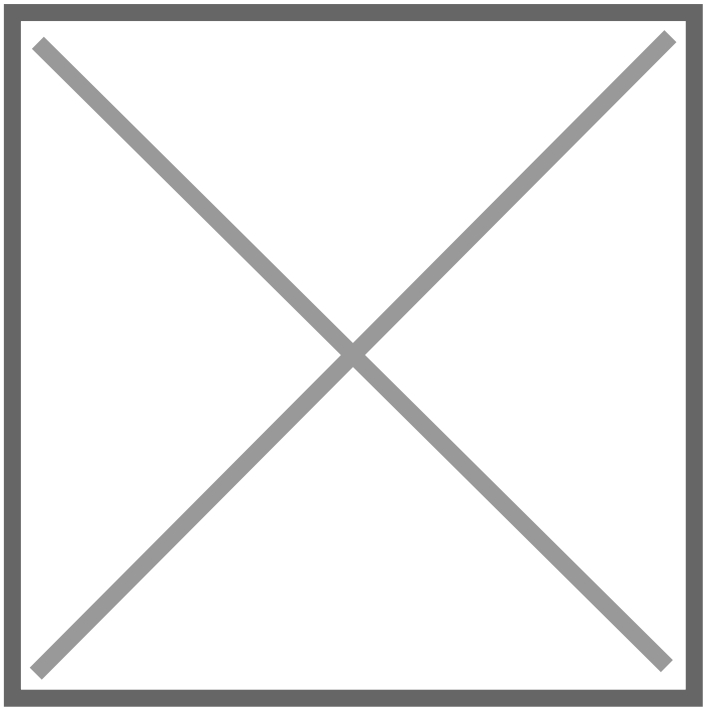


Swiss biotech industry set to grow

07 July 2005 | News



The Swiss biotech industry is among the largest and most diversified in Europe.

Accounting for 79 of the 465 European products in the pipeline, the Swiss biotech industry ranks an impressive second in Europe in terms of revenue and market capitalization according to the Swiss Biotech Association. In terms of the number of core biotech companies, Switzerland ranks sixth in Europe and ninth worldwide. Compared with the size of its population, Switzerland has the highest biotech density worldwide.

"One Nation, One Biotech Cluster,"

said Domenico Alexakis, executive director, Swiss Biotech Association (SBA).

How does the SBA promote Switzerland as an attractive location for biotechs?
The SBA is proud to be founding member of the four organized geographic biotech clusters from Bio Alps (Bassin Lemanique), Bio Polo Ticino (Southern Region), Bio Valley Basle and Greater Zurich Area. The alliance is completed by the SWX Swiss Exchange. In conjunction with these partners, it is a lot easier to promote the sector on a national and international level. In fact, we are the only country worldwide which can position "one nation - one biotech cluster." The regional geographical and business specialties make the appearance interesting and varied in form. The SWX Swiss Exchange has put emphasis on the sector early on and is known as one of the best listing places for life science companies.

How does the SBA support the companies?
The companies communicate their needs to our board of directors or directly to the executive office. We then discuss the matter and execute a process, which in the end goes back to the individual member company or results in a short member information/consultation, etc. The tasks vary from writing a recommendation letter to organizing an SBA event on a particular topic. The variety of the industry is mirrored in the variety of the company needs.

About one-third of all Swiss core biotech companies have been founded before 1995 and by the end of 2003, the industry employed over 13,000 people. Switzerland has approximately 250 small and medium-sized enterprises active in biotechnology.

Biotechnology enjoys a favorable regulatory and administrative environment in Switzerland. The entry into force on January 1, 2004 of the Federal Act on Genetic Engineering in the Non-Human Domain, will soon be complemented by similar legislation for the human domain according to SOFI. These regulations not only cover current technology, but strengthen the legal basis for further developments in biotechnology. On the administrative side, the federal co-ordination centre for biotechnology provides one-stop processing of notifications and applications for authorization.

Swiss delegation visits India
With a view to promote Indo-Swiss business in the biotech sector, the Swiss Organization for Facilitating Investments (SOFI) led a delegation of seven companies from Switzerland to India recently. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), its MOU partner Swiss Organization for

Facilitating Investments (SOFI) and Embassy of Switzerland had coordinated the visit of an 11 member Swiss Biotechnology Entrepreneurs Mission to India in the first week of May. This was a follow up visit to the CII's mission to Zurich in October last year.

According to Viktor Grabik, mission coordinator and director, SubÃ¢â?¬â??Saharan Africa and Indian Sub Continent, SOFI, the visit of Swiss delegation to India was very fruitful, as it has thrown up a gamut of opportunities for forging alliances and joint ventures. Addressing the participants, Domenico P Alexakis, leader of the mission and executive director of the Swiss Biotech Association, said that it was the first step towards a meaningful dialogue in identifying business opportunities and areas of synergy between India and Switzerland in the emerging sector of biotechnology and specifically mentioned that the delegation was highly impressed by state of the art technology used by some of the Indian biotech companies.

During the visit, the delegation traveled to Bangalore, Mumbai, and New Delhi to interact with Indian biotech companies and research institutions to look at practical ways of promoting investment and business between the two countries. The delegation also made a courtesy call to Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Science and Technology. CII also signed an MOU with SOFI to promote much greater industrial and commercial cooperation between the two countries. A business meeting of Indian entrepreneurs under the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) was also organized in Bangalore.