

## "Market for culture media growing at over 20 percent"

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**Dr GM Warke, CEO, HiMedia Laboratories**

Started as an import substitution company, by a small team of researchers from Bombay University in the Mid 70s, for bacteriological culture media, HiMedia Laboratories rose to the occasion by catering to comprehensive needs of the laboratory sector. Today HiMedia, an ISO 9000 company, is rapidly emerging as a plant tissue culture, animal and insect cell culture, molecular biology and immunodiagnosics company. HiMedia, including the R&D staff of 25, has a total employee strength of 525. It has been exporting its range of products over 2,000 in number in dehydrated culture media, bulk raw materials for fermentation, laboratory chemicals, antibiotic sensitivity products and laboratory consumables to over 80 countries and at the same time reaching the Indian customers through a network of 2,000 distributors. Recently HiMedia has launched veg peptones that match the performances of all the traditional animal/bovine based peptones in North America and Australia, through an alliance with VWR International, a pure play global distributor. BioSpectrum spoke to Dr GM Warke, CEO, HiMedia Laboratories, about HiMedia and the market for culture media. Excerpts of the interview:

With increasing use of culture media in biopharmaceutical companies, how do you see the market potential for culture media in India and world over? And at what rate is the market growing?

One of the most critical and important raw materials for biopharma is culture media and is directly proportionate to the growth of the industry. The culture media (for both microbial and cell culture) is growing at over 20 percent. The present decade has

shown tremendous growth and investment in the pharmaceutical sector in India as well as globally. The growth potential observed pertains mainly to regulated markets. Several Indian biopharma companies are at the sourcing end for these markets, and these are the ones that require quality assured, consistent and cost-effective raw material supplies with various quality systems and certification program. HiMedia is in a sound position to cater to this market. Apart from Indian manufacturers, many global biopharma players have identified HiMedia as a reliable raw material source for their production lines.

**In your view, what would be size of market for culture media in India and globally?**

According to our estimate, the size of culture media in India would be around Rs 150 crore. Globally the market for microbiology culture media is about \$1 billion and for cell culture media it is about \$3-4 billion.

**Who are global players in culture media and how do you see the competition in this market?**

Globally there are a handful of companies that deal in culture media. In microbiological culture media, we have BD, Merck, Oxoid and bioMerieux while in cell culture media, the players include Invitrogen, Sigma and Cambrex.

Biopharma companies, which consume cell culture media, have overseas contractual arrangements with strings attached. Their commitment of importing raw materials at an exorbitant price may weaken in the face of convenient (time to come in) prices made available by the HiMedia. Today we are a leading global player in microbiological culture media and has established ourselves as a leader as an only company which has a complete range of 750 animal-free media used in every industry.

**Which are the other Indian companies operating in this space?**

There is no competition to match the quality and sweep of HiMedia product range. However, there are small players such as Titan Biotech who cater to clinical and pathological segments.

**Recently HiMedia launched veg peptones. What is the initial feedback you have received and when are you going to launch these products in India?**

The launch was successful and the top biopharmas are in the process of evaluating and validating the HiVeg line of products.

**What is the strategy/model you have adopted to reach out to global customers?**

World-class quality products at affordable prices have been the backbone philosophy of HiMedia for the last 30 years, which has been acknowledged by International competitors. With state-of-the-art facilities and all necessary certification and accreditations in place, HiMedia is at par with global competition.

Narayan Kulkarni