

“We have the confidence to manufacture in India”

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Q: Please tell us about the recent developments at DSS Takara Bio India (DTI)?

We are now manufacturing molecular biology reagents including PCR and RT PCR in India which happily is in line with the 'Make in India' campaign of the Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi. We have made it happen in collaboration with the Japanese company, Takara Bio. During our course of work, we have learnt a great deal about accuracy, consistency, and very strict quality control (QC) measures from our Japanese partner. It has been a great learning process and which we have been able to maintain and implement successfully in our manufacturing unit. It took more than one and half years to put up the infrastructure that has been rolled out now. Now, we have got the confidence to manufacture in India.

The products being made here include Taq, SYBR, and other RT PCR enzymes for the world market. While we are exporting to Japan, from where these are getting distributed across the globe, the same products are also being marketed in the Indian domestic market as well. With the same parameters for different markets, the products we have just launched in India have been well received. We look forward to produce many more of such products from 2015 onwards.

Q: What gives you the confidence despite competition from already established brands in India?

Takara Taq is already extremely popular with clients as it enjoys an established credibility. It has been seen that the cheap tag doesn't go down well with clients in India and hence we offer cost effectiveness. It means an affordable product for our clients which not only comes at a lesser price but also with an equally good performance. The rates will be 30-40 percent lesser than known brands and we took two years to ensure that the QC is not compromised. The QC protocol goes to Japan for verification and there are three batch tests for any product that is sent. We have already launched RNAiso and DNA ladder, apart from receiving QC approval for Ex Taq, which we are launching shortly. I am delighted to mention that DSS is a pioneer in partnering with a Japanese company to produce molecular biology reagents in India.

Q: Apart from molecular biology, how has been DSS ImageTech's performance in microscopy and diagnostics?

Since a few products are complicated to make, we are at the moment going to be restricted to molecular biology reagents for research and diagnostics. As far as marketing of diagnostic products is concerned, our relationship with Abbott has gotten stronger. We have received an order on HIV diagnostics from National Aids Control Organization (NACO). Also, there is lot of discussion on Hepatitis in India which as per reports, is considered more active threat than HIV. We are bringing in a platform from Abbott, who have 40 years of experience in the area. It has launched the MTB, HPV, HIV, Hepatitis diagnosis on a single platform. This is the way in which we are going to be a one stop solution for all molecular diagnostic requirements of various diseases.

Despite takeover by Agilent Technologies, Dako's products, mostly cancer diagnostics, are being marketed by us. They still decided to go through our network rather than their own. It speaks volumes about our credibility in the market. We conduct lot of training programs in India and neighbouring nations such as Nepal.

The FISH technique solution from Abbott which we launched at BHU saw the presence of 32 cancer experts. While being a commercial organization, we are still within our limits trying to educate people about interpretation of results, making them more aware about usage of tools to fine tune research.

We work in major two areas in molecular diagnostics. One is infectious diseases, diagnosis of HIV, Hepatitis, Papilloma virus, and MTB through Abbott. Another is cancer diagnostics for which FISH by Abbott and immunohistochemistry through Dako(Agilent).

In microscopy, we have done extremely well through our tie up with the Olympus. However, last two years have not been so encouraging. We had setbacks with microscopy due to loss of one of our top executives.

Q: How has your financial performance been in the last one year? What is your overall strategy to boost prospects?

The overall revenue of DSS Group during the FY 2013-14 was Rs 195 crore as compared to Rs 171 Crore recorded as turnover in the previous fiscal year.

The R&D section of DSS has been recognized by DBT and at present a good number of activities are in progress there. We are in collaboration with Delhi University, developing a high end test in a project funded by the DBT. DSS is not just a marketing company but focus has been on innovation and strategy being joint ventures.

Q: How do you look at government policies for the sector? What is required?

Food and agriculture offer immense potential. We need to create enough opportunities and equally right policies for that. There has to be a pragmatic policy for preclinical trials and genetically modified crops. We can't delay the decisions as meetings after meetings in this direction have failed to elicit any favourable response. There is a dire need for the people in science to take charge of these issues.