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Biotech industry supports new EU biofuels initiative

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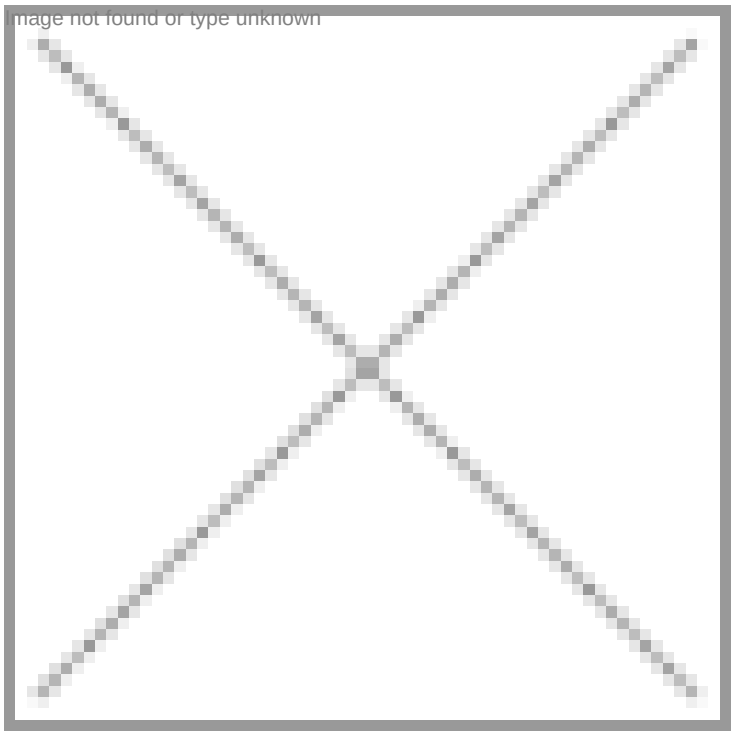

Biotech industry supports new EU biofuels initiative

Welcoming the European Commission's launch of the Biofuels Technology Platform, the European Association for Bioindustries, EuropaBio, has announced the setting up of a Biofuels Task Force within EuropaBio to coordinate the industry input.

The new Biofuels Task Force mission is "to advocate coherently favorable policies, strategies, regulations and their implementation for research, finance, and market access of biofuels as one of the pillars of the competitive and sustainable European knowledge-based bio-economy, increasing the value of plants and renewable materials of agricultural and forestry origin".

The newly launched European Biofuels Technology Platform is intended to provide and implement a common European vision and strategy for the production of biofuels, in particular for transport applications, and be compatible with present-day infrastructures. Europ a Bio is a member of BIOFRAC, the Biofuels Research Advisory Council, which has developed the draft vision document for the Biofuels Technology Platform.

Biofuels represent the convergence of several existing sectors. Industrial biotechnology provides the conversion processes for biomass, crop biotechnology will increasingly contribute to the sustainable supply of sufficient biomass; and energy companies will provide the route to market. Total and BP, two major players in the energy sector, have joined the EuropaBio Biofuels Task Force.

In welcoming the formation of the new EuropaBio Task Force on Biofuels, Jack Huttner, chair of EuropaBio's Industrial Biotechnology Council, said, "Biotechnology has the potential to enable the sustainable production of the fuels and chemicals advanced economies need to prosper. But, policy sector support is essential for this progress to occur.

Source: www.europabio.org

Government announces support for NZ biotech industry

The biotechnology industry in New Zealand will receive extra government funding of $1.2 million over the next three years to help its growth and exports, announced Trevor Mallard, minister for Economic Development, government of New Zealand.

New Zealand's Biotech Industry Organisation, NZBio, the industry body established in 2003 under the Government's Growth and Innovation Framework Sector Taskforces, will receive $400,000 each year until 2009 to lead growth in the biotechnology industry.

Trevor Mallard said, "NZBio represents the kind of high potential, value-added industry. A number of companies have made good progress developing products for global markets and the industry as a whole is going from strength to strength. NZBio delivers a range of services to the industry and it is important that the organization's capability is maintained to enable the industry to continue its contribution to New Zealand's economic growth."

NZBio has received $1.35 million in government funding to date to assist its work. The organization, which has significant industry backing, supports regional biotechnology networks and has led policy initiatives on a number of issues. It also aims to work to generate valuable intellectual property and to create a favorable operating environment for commercialization, as well as developing business connections and promoting industry development.

New Zealand has one of the world's fastest growing biotechnology sectors. The income from biotechnology for the 2004-05 financial year was $811 million, compared to $675 million in 2003-04 and $475 million in 2002-03. In the five years to June 2004, 348 biotechnology-related patents were granted compared with 156 between 1994 and 1999; and in 2005 the sector employed 2,424 people, 160 more than in 2004.

Source: www.nzbio.org.nz

Public support for stem cell research remains strong

The Australian Community continues to strongly support stem cell research from adult and embryonic stem cells, with a general belief that human stem cell research is morally acceptable to society if serious disease can be treated or prevented. These were the findings of a recent study, released by the Australian government agency, Biotechnology Australia, examining Australian community attitudes towards human stem cell research.

The study also found there is a low understanding and awareness of the meaning of terms such as therapeutic cloning or somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Craig Cormick, manager of Biotechnology Australia's public awareness program, said, "It is difficult to state with any certainty public attitudes towards stem cell techniques described as either therapeutic cloning or somatic cell nuclear transfer when well over 70 percent of the public have either never heard of these technical terms or don't know enough about them to make a judgement." "The study found that most people find it difficult to understand details relating to human stem cell research, even the differences between adult and embryonic stem cells."

The study has been conducted annually since 2002. It shows increasing levels of support towards using human stem cells derived from adult cells (70 percent support in 2002 and 76 percent support in 2006). Using human stem cells derived from embryos has also received increasing support (53 percent support in 2002 and 64 percent support in 2006). There continues

to be very limited public support for human cloning (eight per cent in 2002 and seven percent in 2006). The study was conducted by Market Attitude Research Services.

Source: www.biotechnology.gov.au