



ABIC 2004

12-15 September, Cologne, Germany

▶▶▶ INDEX

Beachy EC Report	_01
Interview	_02
Interview Report	_03
Rates & Options	_04

CALL FOR POSTERS

Best three posters will win one delegate ticket.

page_04

▶▶▶ CITY-INFOS

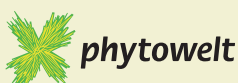
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ABIC is the acronym for
AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



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St. Louis, 10/05/04

It's not all about Business: AgBiotech can help Developing Countries



Roger N. Beachy, Ph.D.

Dr. Roger N. Beachy burst on the biotech scene in 1986, when his lab became the first to genetically engineer virus-resistant tomatoes. Since then, he's dedicated his life to ensuring that the advances of "privileged" nations are shared with the developing world - a mission he has vigorously pursued as head of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Missouri, which seeks to help developing world scientists partner with their more fortunate colleagues. He is also a member of the ABIC 2004 steering committee, and will chair a panel discussion at this year's ABIC conference to address concerns over unwanted trait transfer.

In this month's featured interview, he talks about the perception of scientists among the lay public, the role of government in promoting and regulating biotechnology, and the economics of sharing intellectual wealth. [page 02_▶▶▶](#)

Roger N. Beachy, Ph.D.

President of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center

Dr. Beachy holds a Ph.D. in plant pathology from Michigan State University. From 1991 to 1998, he headed the Division of Plant Biology at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California. Prior to joining the Scripps Institute, Dr. Beachy was a member of the Washington University Biology Department from 1978 to 1991 where he was Professor and Head of the Center for Plant Science and Biotechnology. Dr. Beachy received the Wolf Prize in Agriculture for 2001. He has edited or contributed to 50 book articles and produced more than 190 journal publications.

One Step Forward...?

In late April, the European Commission presented a semi-optimistic report on the implementation of its "Life Sciences & Biotechnology Strategy". A week later, a revision to the Technology Transfer Block Exemption Regulation (TTBER) took effect. Critics say the tentative step forward gingerly hinted at in the report has been more than offset by the decisive step backward that thunders from the revision.

First to the good news: in its report, the Commission points to the launch of a high-level advisory group on "Competitiveness in Biotechnology" and the completion of an EU framework for regulating Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) as proof that things have gotten better. But the report concedes that in concrete areas such as agreement on the regulation of intellectual property rights, things have in fact gotten worse.

And Aisling Burnand, Chief Executive of the Biotechnology Industry Association (BIA), says the revisions to the TTBER "mean that companies will have to deal with labyrinthine uncertainties of competition regulations that the Commission has failed to clarify in the Guidelines accompanying the Regulation."

The TTBER is a set of terms and principles designed to differentiate between collusion and cooperation - so that companies wishing to enter into licensing agreements can do so without running afoul of competition laws. "To come within the new rules, companies working together must now not have a combined market share of more than 30 per cent of either technology or products," Burnand says. "The innovative nature of the bioscience sector means that companies can find themselves at times with a high, even a 100 per cent, market share."

[page 03_▶▶▶](#)

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Beachy on AgBiotech



Cassava (also known as Yuca, Tapioca or Manioc) is one of the most important tropical root crops. The edible, starchy roots are a major source of low cost carbohydrates for more than 500 million people. It is known to be the highest producer of carbohydrates among staple crops. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), cassava ranks fourth of all food crops in the developing countries after rice, corn and wheat. The leaves are rich on protein and can be consumed. Cassava can be stored in the ground for several seasons, which makes it ideal as a reserve food when other crops fail. A problem with cassava is the poisonous cyanides which have to be disarmed before consumption. In Francophone areas Cassava is called "Manioc" and Tapioca in Latin America. The Portuguese name it "Mandioca" and the Spanish "Yucca".

? **Delegates to ABIC 2004 will be asked to contribute to a Biotech Manifesto that will lay down the role of biotechnology in society. What are your thoughts on this endeavor?**

• I have a growing concern about the unwillingness of the lay public to accept the testimony of scientists and the validity of scientific studies that relate to agricultural biotechnology. It's a cynicism that's not limited to the US or to Europe and Canada. That's why it's important that scientists as a group learn to communicate with the lay public, with the hope that by doing so, non-scientists will recognize the important role of science and technology in addressing issues that affect all of us.

? **How can we lay people differentiate between healthy skepticism and blind cynicism?**

• Scientists may differ among themselves, but it's important for the general public to be aware of who is differing with whom. It is not uncommon for a social scientist to differ with a biologist on issues in biological sciences, yet each scientist is given the same weight in the eyes of the general public and the policy makers.

The issue of how much weight to give opinions of scientists from different backgrounds needs to be explained if we're to present to the public the consequences of the work in biotechnology.

? **In our last newsletter, Dr. Klaus Ammann was very critical of some environmental groups, such as Greenpeace, and supportive of others like the WWF. Would you agree with him that some groups have been better than others at taking a critical stance as opposed to an almost religious stance?**

• Absolutely! And, it is important to recognize when a noted spokesperson from an environmental group makes statements indicating that they have learned the value of a new technology or that a product is safe, and that the environment is not harmed. Dr. Allison Snow, a speaker at the upcoming ABIC, is a strong environmentalist with regard to the use of agricultural biotechnology. However, after conducting studies in areas of specific concern to her, she has become convinced that biotechnology will be an important component of sustainable agriculture. Dr. Snow and other environmental scientists bring a great deal to the discussion, and should be recognized for their efforts. There are other outstanding ecologists and population biologists who recognize the importance of agriculture biotechnology, yet we never hear from them. Instead, we let non-biologists who have a different agenda take center stage without challenge, and use scare tactics on the public.

? **One of your own projects is called the International Laboratory for Tropical Agricultural Biotechnology, which is designed to help give farmers in developing countries access to cutting-edge biotechnology. Can you tell us about that?**

• In 1991, Claude Fauquet and I initiated tropical agricultural biotechnology research at the Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California. When Claude joined the Danforth Plant Science Center in 1999, this program was also relocated. To date, more than 140 different scientists from more than 35 countries have received training by working in research projects that will benefit their home countries. Activities range from plant cell and tissue culture to the development of diagnostics to detect viral pathogens. Others have learned how to develop transgenic strategies to control diseases common to crops that are indigenous to the countries from which our partners come. The greatest effort by Dr. Fauquet and his colleagues has been on cassava, a root crop that feeds about 600 million people Africa and Asia. It's drought-resistant, but is also extremely susceptible to certain virus diseases; Fauquet and his colleagues have developed useful biotechnologies to control these diseases.

? **But you also talk a lot about the economics of technology sharing. Can you flesh that out a bit?**

• We have an obligation to share knowledge with those in developing countries so that together we can conquer some of the diseases and other conditions that face the very poor in those countries. Only by such collaboration will we achieve the ambitious Millennium goals set by the United Nations. At the Danforth Center, we encourage all of our scientists to identify partners for research projects that may have benefit for developing countries. The philosophy is that while conducting cutting-edge research, one should consider how the research could benefit agriculture for both the profit-driven and non-profit sectors. The targets for our research in developing countries are not soybeans or maize, but peanuts pulse crops, and root and tuber crops and cassava and sweet potatoes.

Intellectual property developed at the Danforth Center is available for commercial licences, but we retain the rights of all discoveries for humanitarian purposes. We include specific language in each of the term sheets and research agreements made with private companies, and encourage other academic scientists to do the same.

? **You have said that government needs to be more proactive in funneling money into research that isn't profitable.**

• There are many areas where government can make a difference, and it's up to us as scientists to identify the most pressing of needs. Here in the US, for example, several highly visible issues related to Africa have been popular to support – including HIV-AIDS or eradication of polio, and others. But there is less recognition that most assistance needs to begin with providing means for adequate food and nutrition. An immune system crippled by poor nutrition doesn't respond to drugs and vaccines as well as a healthy individual. The Nobel Laureate Norman Borlaug has done an excellent job publicizing this over the years. It's time for more of us to follow suit.

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page 02_>>>

For the complete interview
download from our website
abic2004.org



Donald Danforth Plant
Science Center
www.danforthcenter.org



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The other area where government can make a difference is in improving the impact that regulatory sciences have on the adoption of new agricultural practices. On the one hand, we recognize the need to increase food production but on the other hand we dramatically restrict the use of one of the most important tools that will help get us there – biotechnology. Informed and rational regulation of biotechnology requires a willingness to accept what science reveals. I don't mean fringe science, but credible science that is conducted according to the highest standards and exposed to critical review by peers. Biotechnology will enable humankind to solve many of the problems it faces in the next 50 years as populations grow and as the climate warms, and as droughts extend into other parts of Africa and Europe. Yet it will not reach its potential if the irrational over-regulation of biotechnology currently sweeping through Europe, and threatening the U.S. system, is introduced in developing countries.

? Several European scientists have given the US science-based regulatory regime higher marks than the European model, which I've heard described as "power-based". Would you agree with that?

☛ In the 1970s, when recombinant DNA technology was new and we didn't know the risks or appreciate the benefits, scientists self-imposed a moratorium – a moratorium that was lifted as the science evolved and it was recognized that the risks could be managed by good practices. In contrast, in the case of agriculture biotechnology we appear not to have benefited by the learning process. Rather than scaling back our evaluation process, we are enhancing the process – and in the process raising the cost of producing new crop varieties, while eliminating more and more participants from product development. The consequence is that academic scientists in our universities and land-grant schools are much less involved than they were in the 1990s in using biotechnology to develop local crops that are protected against disease and pests and pathogens, or increasing nutritional composition of crops, etc.; the costs to do so are usually too high for an academic institution to bear.

? Can this be quantified?

☛ If one looks at the numbers of field tests conducted by universities from the mid-1990s to 2003, one sees annual increases until 2000, when the numbers dropped dramatically. The numbers of field test conducted by university scientists last year were lower than they were in 1998. Regulation is important and necessary, but the current regulatory regime hasn't learned what's necessary and what isn't.

? Are there any cases of regulators having stopped a biotech product that in hindsight have prevented problems from occurring?

☛ I don't know of any examples where regulators have found a problem that had real risk associated with it; on the other hand, there have been a number of cases where biotech companies have voluntarily stopped development because of concerns raised by their own research. There are many more cases where a potential product line was

pulled because the developer was not convinced that the cost of clearing the regulatory process could be recovered in the marketplace.

? You've also been on the record as saying that traceability was over-stressed – but that was before the BSE scare in the US. Do you still say traceability is over-stressed?

☛ Yes, especially in crops. Choose a hypothetical example: someone says that corn grown in southern Switzerland has a higher nutritional value than corn grown elsewhere, but he doesn't prove it yet can attract a premium for the corn. To that farmer, traceability is valuable, but it doesn't make the corn more nutritious. Traceability can be used in many ways, and it's often used for non-scientific reasons. If there's a scientific reason, such as the case with BSE, there may be a sound rationale for tracing a source of beef because we know that the presence of BSE can be harmful. If there is no evidence of harm or potential harm, it makes no sense to require traceability. Traceability may be important for profitability, but unless and until it has a rationale that is shown to protect the consumer, I do not support it.

? What drew you to participate in the ABIC Conference?

☛ A key factor to my support of ABIC is the interest and willingness of the organizers to present not only the science and use of biotechnology, but also the potential impact of the science on community in a scientific light. You won't see non-scientist activists on the podium, because they have little to offer the science per se. Rather, we expect to engage in a scientific discussion per se. I hope that the media will learn the difference between scare-tactic non-science claims and science claims that need additional study, and those for which the science has reached a conclusion. I have no preconceptions that all journalists who attend will be fully informed, but I hope we get some with a science background who can help to interpret for the lay audience what biotechnology is, how the scientific process of peer review and debate work, and how biotechnology will be used to achieve a sustainable future for agriculture.

EC Report page 01_>>> "Many bioscience licensing agreements will now fall outside the new Block Exemption, resulting in higher legal costs – an unnecessary and unhelpful burden for emerging, innovative companies," she added. "Increased uncertainty and additional bureaucracy could reduce the competitiveness of the European bioscience sector and the ability of the industry to deliver new treatments for the many life-threatening and debilitating diseases that still have no cure. This flies in the face of the European Commission's own Life Sciences & Biotechnology Strategy and its recently launched consultation, 'Innovate for a competitive Europe'. Patients – the end-users whom the competition regime is intended to help – will be the losers."

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CALL FOR POSTERS

Best three posters will win one delegate ticket.

You are invited to take part in the ABIC Poster Session competition. The contest is open to all non-commercial institutions. The subject of the work pre-presented should be in relation to the topics of the program (see below).

The best 3 posters selected by an independent committee will be awarded with a free ABIC 2004 delegate ticket. The deadline for poster submission is July 2nd, 2004.

For participation, registration as a delegate is required. For more details please contact the ABIC Organisation Office or mail to:

posters@abic2004.org

▶ PROGRAM UPDATE

The full program can be downloaded as a PDF-file from this location:
www.abic2004.org/download/ABIC2004_program.pdf

Trade Fair Conditions and Rates

Complementary with the conference, the business of AgBiotechnology will have the unique chance to present products and services. The Trade Fair will take place in the localities of the Cologne Fair. Main Sponsors will present in the especially well located exhibition area at the Auenplatz, which is the central place of the Congress Center West. Due to its immediate vicinity to the Netherlands, Belgium and France and being less than one flight hour from Great Britain, the Cologne Fair is the place of choice to get in contact with European Customers and partners.

**BOOTH RATES**

In HALL 3 50 pre-equipped booths of 9 m² will be available. The price per square meter is Euro 250,- (+ V.A.T.). In addition, raw space is available with minimum size of 15 m²; the price for the raw space will be Euro 190,- (+ V.A.T.) per square meter.

9m² booth (pre-equipped):

Regular: Euro 2250,- + V.A.T.

Premium: Euro 3750,- + V.A.T.

15m² booth: Euro 2850,- (raw space) + V.A.T.

The full exhibitors manual will be sent to you on request.

DELEGATE REGISTRATION RATES

Prices include Breakfast, Lunch and Beverages

Regular Rate: Euro 750,- + V.A.T.

(after July 2nd 2004)

Academic Rate*: Euro 375,- + V.A.T.

Student Rate*: Euro 250,- + V.A.T.

One Day Delegate Rate: Euro 250,- + V.A.T.

Exhibitor Delegate Rate: Euro 250,- + V.A.T.

Group Discounts: 3-5 Delegates: - 10 %
6 or more Delegates: - 15 %

Early Bird Rates:

(all before July 2nd 2004)

Early Bird Regular Rate: Euro 675,- + V.A.T.

Early Bird Academic Rate*: Euro 350,- + V.A.T.

Early Bird Student Rate*: Euro 200,- + V.A.T.

* Academic and Student Delegates: You must provide verification of academic or student status to qualify for the Academic or Student rate.

Special Partnering Event

One session of the Conference program will be fully dedicated to the subject of Business Partnering (see program below). Approximately 20 companies will be given time and technology to appropriately present themselves as part of the **Premium Partnering Package**. Throughout ABIC a special area in the trade fair hall will provide optimized partnering procedures for registered partnering event participants. In addition a special section of the ABIC website www.abic2004.org will be reserved for the partnering event. This service will be made available in due time.

PARTNERING RATES

Regular Partnering: Euro 350,- + V.A.T. (one to one meetings plus Web Partnering)

Premium Partnering: Euro 750,- + V.A.T. (Business Presentation at Forum plus Regular Partnering)

Prices are added to Delegate Rates. Partnering possible throughout ABIC to allow participants to arrange meetings at convenience.

Session (Day)	The Business of Biotechnology	Advances in Plant Improvement	New Opportunities through Biotechnology
01	The Role and Importance of Ethics for Agricultural Biotechnology in Europe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round Table Discussion 	Controlling Expression in Transgenes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulating Expression of Transgenes in Plants • Expression of Genes in specific Tissues • Environmental Assessment of Risks and Benefits of Regulated Expression 	Plants as green factories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for producing PMPs* in Plants (Molecular Farming) • Improvement of Fiber Crops by Genetic Engineering • Engineering New Biosynthetic Pathways <p>* Plant-made pharmaceuticals</p>
02	Co-existence of Transgenic and Non-Transgenic Crops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gene Flow and Co-Existence • Scientific Basis of Co-Existence • Ecological Impact of GMOs 	Synergies between Breeding and Biotechnology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genomics/Allele Mining • Advanced Mapping Tools • Use of Model Genomes 	Biotechnology and Food Security for the Resource-Poor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the Need for new Solutions: Africa • Case Study of a real Biotech Solution: China • Managing IP to Benefit the Resource-Poor - Case Study Mexico
03	Business Forum: Consumer Benefits and Industrial Perspectives of AgBiotechnology / Industry Presentations		
04	The Business of Biotechnology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investments in Biotech in Asia • Dos and Dents for Biotech Start-ups • Today's and Future Markets in Plant Biotech 	Improvements in Non-Food Crops <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biotechnological Applications in Forestry • Oil Palm Breeding and competitive Approaches • Biotechnology and Ornamental Plants 	Nutraceuticals as Links between Food and Health: Using Biotechnology to Improve Our Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polyunsaturated Fatty acids • "Golden Rice" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classical Breeding - Food Processing/Fortification

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