

ABIC 2006

6-9 August

newsletter



March issue index

- 1 New biotech centre
- 2 Murray Cod DNA
- 2 World class agbio from down under
- 3 Dr. RJ Wall
- 3 Session: Monday 7, 2pm
- 4 The ABIC foundation
- 4 Exhibition, sponsorship and advertising opportunities

Premier opens 21st century biotech centre

Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, last month opened the \$20 million state-of-the-art Victorian Agribiosciences Centre, heralding it as a major indication that Victoria was well on track to be one of the top five biotechnology locations in the world by 2010.

Mr Bracks joined Innovation Minister, John Brumby, at the launch and said the Victorian Agribiosciences Centre (VABC) at the La Trobe University R&D Park in Bundoora would cement the state's reputation as an international biotechnology leader.

The Bracks Government contributed \$7.8 million to the VABC, with La Trobe University funding \$12 million.

"Biotechnology is emerging as one of the most important drivers of innovation and growth for 21st Century Victoria," Mr Bracks said.

"Food and fibre is an immensely important part of our economy with Victoria exporting \$6.8 billion in 2004 alone.

"The yield, quality, pest and drought resistance of our agricultural industry will depend increasingly on our understanding of the genes behind these traits and our ability select for these traits.

"Research and development undertaken at the VABC will help improve the state's food production and manufacturing capabilities as well as create jobs and export markets in the future.

"The centre is a great example of how Government, university and private sector investment into Agrifood biotechnology and research and development facilities will result in real results for Victoria's food industries."

During the opening Mr Brumby also announced details of a new Victorian-based agricultural biotechnology company, Gramina Pty Ltd.

Mr Brumby said Gramina was joint venture between Australian and New Zealand

companies to develop and commercialise grass technologies developed at the VABC.

"Gramina clearly demonstrates the VABC's abilities in action and Victoria's ability to assist with State, national and overseas biotech interests," Mr Brumby said.

"This company - to be based at the VABC - will look at ways to improve on-farm productivity and is set to become a significant global player in the new temperate grass technologies over the next decade."

VABC Chairman, Prof German Spangenberg, said the Centre was a one stop shop for academic, commercial research and development groups, and included a 'Research Hotel' which provides office space and access to expertise for new and emerging biotechnology companies.

"The collective know how of the VABC will help improve sustainable use of environmental resources for agriculture that in turn benefits both Victorian and overseas communities," Prof Spangenberg said.

The VABC consortium comprises La Trobe University, Bundoora, Department of Primary Industries Victoria (DPIV), RMIT University, Monash University, Florigene Ltd - a division of Suntory, Molecular Plant Breeding CRC and GE HealthCare Biosciences. ■

Host Industry Body



Host State & Principal Sponsor



Major Sponsors



Register now at
www.abic2006.org

From left: Professor German Spangenberg; Minister Sherryl Garbutt; Minister Bob Cameron; Minister John Brumby and Premier Steve Bracks in the Microarray lab at the Victorian AgriBiosciences Centre (VABC) in Bundoora. The Professor is holding a DNA Chip which holds 90,000 Genes and conducted a tour of the Centre after its Official Launch this morning, February 15, 2006. Picture (DPI/Shaney Balcombe).



Back to the future for the Murry Cod

In a 'back-to-the-future' style step towards unlocking the mysteries of the Murray cod, Victorian scientists have developed a world-first library of cod DNA using data accumulated over decades.

"If we know the best genetics for our fish stocking, we get the best ongoing results," Agriculture Minister Bob Cameron said.

One-hundred and ninety thousand cod were released by Fisheries Victoria in the past year.

Mr Cameron said a team of researchers from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) was using the library to develop a selective breeding program for Murray cod, in order to maintain the genetic diversity of wild populations and to enhance aquaculture.

"The Murray cod is an important or iconic fish with significant recreational, conservation, cultural, and aquaculture value in Victoria."

He said the project had extracted DNA from fish scales collected over half a century ago by Victorian fisheries scientists.

"The DNA in these historic scales represent the genetic diversity in Murray cod populations from southern sections of the Murray Darling river system at that time, including the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Goulburn and Ovens rivers.

"The genetic diversity of these historic populations will be compared to that of current cod populations across the whole Murray Darling system, as fisheries researchers are now collecting scales from Murray cod populations in four states (SA, NSW, QLD, and Victoria)."

DPI scientist Dr Brett Ingram said the library was an excellent tool for tracking changes in Murray cod populations over the past 50 years and seeing how we can apply the knowledge gained to enhance our management of the species into the future.

"Using advanced gene marker and reproduction technologies, this program will help us develop sound management strategies to promote the long-term survival of wild populations, with flow on benefits to anglers, the aquaculture industry and the environment," Dr Ingram said.

The project is being carried out at DPI's Snobs Creek and Attwood centres, and is funded by the Bracks Government, through the Our Rural Landscapes Initiative and Fisheries Victoria.

Some of the work is also being supported through a Monash University scholarship. ■

World class agbio from down under

By combining their strengths in research, primary production and the application of new technologies, New Zealand and Australia are forging a partnership in agricultural biotechnology which is giving the region the capability to be global leaders.

Cooperation rather than competition is the watchword for the relationship between the New Zealand and Australian biotechnology communities, which together constitute the fifth largest biotech hub in the world, employing more than 10,000 people and with combined annual revenues of around \$NZ14 million (\$US9 million).

While Australia's biotechnology sector is a lot bigger, New Zealand has significant capability which has the potential to give Australian agricultural biotech companies the edge they need as they fight for a foothold in the global biotech industry.

In addition to its world-leading animal health status, New Zealand has strengths in pasture-

based plant and animal genomics, reproductive and cloning technologies, large animal models of human diseases and using molecular approaches to solve animal health issues and to enhance human health.

The convergence of agriculture and biomedicine is a defining and unique feature of New Zealand's biotechnology sector. For example, New Zealand company LactoPharma, is discovering biologically active compounds in milk and colostrum for the development of functional food products, specialty ingredients, nutraceuticals and pharmaceuticals.

New Zealand also has extensive knowledge of the biology of industrially significant plants, grasses, trees and crops which includes access to some unique germ plasm and expanding genomic databases. For nearly three decades, propagation of plants in culture from tiny tissue samples has been a niche business in New Zealand. →

→ Australia, meanwhile, is well positioned for the biotech age, with strengths in research, manufacturing, agriculture and food production and international recognition for its advances in medical and biological sciences.

Trans-Tasman collaborative ventures in agbio have been underway for a number of years, some supported by the NZ\$12 million (US\$7.6 million) Australia New Zealand Biotechnology Partnership Fund.

One example is the joint venture company *ensis* (www.ensisjv.com), a partnership between Scion and CSIRO, Australasia's two leading forestry research and development organisations. The increased scale of *ensis* and its depth of research capacity mean the company can tackle complex problems that will help the sector remain globally competitive.

New Zealand's Crop and Food Research and Horticulture Australia are collaborating to identify common vegetable varieties that exhibit enhanced functionality. The first target in this NZ\$22 million (\$US14 million) project is broccoli, which is well known for its cancer reducing effects.

Other trans-Tasman collaborations in agbio innovation are taking place in the areas of research into 'designer pastures' which could produce more herbage and reduce pollen allergens, bovine genome sequencing and applying biotechnologies in the meat, wool and dairy sectors. ■

Session synopses

Each month the ABIC 2006 newsletter will feature a session that will be held at the conference

Monday 7th August 2006
2:00pm - 3:30pm

Commercialisation of innovative plant biotechnology

Public sector research continues to develop a wealth of new, innovative technologies. Successful commercialization of these technologies requires objective, business-based, technology investment decisions by entities that are independent of the academic organizations that develop the technology. These may range from technology transfer offices to organizations that act as early-stage investors and also have the expertise to raise capital to advance the work from the laboratory bench to that of a viable commercial opportunity.

The purpose of this session is to explore different business models for bringing technology to the market and managing the intellectual property (IP) estate to provide the necessary protection and an ongoing revenue stream for the originating institution. Developers of technology often encounter significant challenges in placing an objective valuation in their innovations, and this has led to opportunities for independent technology and IP companies to manage a substantial portfolio on behalf of multiple institutions, and license the technology to a variety of industry sectors. This session draws on experts from widely differing institutions in four countries who will share their technology commercialization experience.

Speakers for this session

Dr. Jan Chojecki (Plant BioSciences Ltd, UK)
Dr. Gord Surgeoner (Ontario Agri-Food & Technology Group, Canada)
Prof. Paul Teng (NIE, Singapore)
Ms Judy Erratt (Gowling, Aust)

Sponsored by

Gowling Lafleur Henderson



Speaker biographical

Dr. Robert J. Wall

Research physiologist (animal)
Biotechnology and Germplasm Laboratory,
Agricultural Research Service
United States Department of Agriculture
Beltsville, MD 20705-2350, USA

Following a career as an electrical engineer, Dr. Wall earned a Ph.D. in physiology and joined the US Department of Agriculture in 1981. For the past 25 years Dr. Wall has focused his attention on developing methods for introducing new genes into animals as a tool for scientific discovery and as a means of improving livestock production efficiency and food quality and safety. Dr. Wall was on the team that produced the first transgenic livestock and recently produced the first cattle resistant to mastitis.

Dr Robert Wall will be presenting "Process towards transgenic livestock" on Tuesday 8 August in the morning plenary session.

For more information on speakers and sessions at ABIC 2006 please visit the official website.

GOWLINGS

Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP
Barristers & Solicitors | Patent & Trade Mark Agents

www.abic2006.org



The ABIC foundation

The World Trade Organization ruling of February 7, 2006 essentially ends the European Union defacto moratorium on biotechnology-improved crops. The decision will affect the future of agricultural biotechnology globally. The ruling gives European farmers the option to use safe, approved tools to grow food crops; consumers the right to choose those foods in grocery stores; and developing nations the confidence to adopt the modern crop technologies while retaining access to European export markets.

Biotech crops offer the potential to increase productivity, provide resistance to environmental stresses such as weeds, pests, or drought and enhance the nutrition provided by these crops. Since 1996, global adoption has risen to 90 million hectares according to the newly released 2005 ISAAA Report (International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications). Working to ensure ongoing opportunities for continuous learning and networking within this growing global agbiotech community is the ABIC Conference series.

The original ABIC Conference series were held as biennial events. A growing demand to hold the

Conference more often and in different areas of the world led to an annual conference following the Cologne event in 2004. The annual series are scheduled to occur in Asia Pacific for 2006 (Melbourne), North America in 2007 (Calgary Alberta Canada), and Europe in 2008.

A Call for Proposal to host ABIC 2009 for the Asia Pacific region went out in October 2005, with submissions due by May 1, 2006. The 2009 location will be formally announced at the 2006 event in Melbourne. ABIC 2010 will return to its roots in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada in the fall of 2010.

The ABIC Foundation is managed by Ag-West Bio Inc., located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. More information on ABIC is available on the website at www.abic.ca or by sending an email to abicfoundation@abic.ca.

Dr. Ashley O'Sullivan

Chair - ABIC Foundation Inc.
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

Exhibition, sponsorship and advertising opportunities

Use ABIC 2006 as a platform to promote your organisation directly to this international gathering of the leaders in the AgBio Industry. High visibility sponsorship and advertising packages are available to suit all budgets and provide maximum exposure both leading up to and during the conference.

A comprehensive Trade Exhibition will run concurrently with the Conference. This will be the largest exhibition dedicated to the AgBio industry in Australia in 2006. Exhibiting is a must for any company within the industry.

For more information on taking advantage of this marketing opportunity please contact the Conference Managers or download a copy of the Sponsorship Prospectus from the Conference website www.abic2006.org Telephone: +61 2 9265 0700 or email: abic2006@tourhosts.com.au

Register now!

...to be a part of the

Agricultural Biotechnology International Conference (ABIC)

6-9 August 2006

Melbourne, Australia

Register at www.abic2006.org for more information on the program, sessions, speakers, local tours & bookings.

Book before 2 June 2006 and receive the Early Bird rate of \$1100

Contact details

AusBiotech Ltd

Address for Communications
ABIC 2006 Conference Managers
GPO Box 128
Sydney NSW 2001 Australia
Tel: +61 2 9265 0700
Fax: +61 2 9267 5443
Email: abic2006@tourhosts.com.au
Website: www.abic2006.org

www.abic2006.org

For more information on ABIC 2006 please visit the official website.