

### Biosafety Platform

PlantBio Trust organised a Biosafety workshop in 2006 bringing together experts from India, Brazil and South Africa under the IBSA trilateral agreement, thereby establishing collaboration between the three countries. South Africa, having been involved with genetically modified (GM) products since 1990, has developed a sound regulatory framework for the approval of GM crops. However, the workshop realised that there was a need to build capacities and to gather the necessary data to generate risk assessments which would help ensure the research and commercialization of the GM crops met the requirements set by the regulatory system. PlantBio therefore decided to take a leading role in this regard and undertook to develop and fund a feasibility study and the drafting of a business plan, to establish a Biosafety Platform for South Africa.



Dr. Jan-Hendrik Groenewald was recently appointed by the Trust to finalise the business plan and work with their team to establish a national Biosafety Platform, which will provide regulatory guidance and have the capacity to facilitate and co-ordinate all matters related to the biosafety of genetically modified products. The platform will operate independently to gather and collate information enabling health, environmental and socio-economic impact assessments to be car-

ried out on these products. Appropriate projects from South African research institutions and companies, which are already in the pipeline to commercialisation, will be identified and supported by the platform.

Dr. Groenewald holds a PhD in Plant Biotechnology from Stellenbosch University and has over 15 years experience in biotechnology research and development in both academic and industrial environments. His formal training includes MBA courses in Intellectual Property Rights, Management of Technology and Innovation as well as Quality Control. He previously held a post as researcher/lecturer at the Institute for Plant Biotechnology, Stellenbosch University. Having developed and lectured courses on entrepreneurship, commercialisation, lab and project management and the South African GM regulatory system to under-graduate students. We have no doubt that Dr. Groenewald will take the Biosafety Platform to great heights.

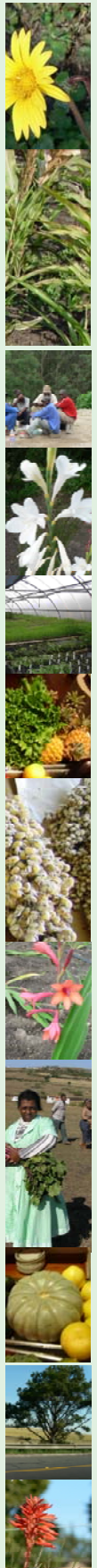


### Bio2Biz 2008

Will take place on the 15-17 September at the Sandton Hotel along side the INSITE and IASPSA conferences .

Exhibition stands will be available.

For more information contact Kgomotso on [kgomotso@biopad.org.za](mailto:kgomotso@biopad.org.za)



## *In vitro* Plant Production Platform given the green light



PlantBio will invest 10 million Rands into the establishment of an *In vitro* (IV) platform. Based in Stellenbosch, the platform will allow the development of plant *in vitro* research and development to generate 'elite mother stocks' of plants suitable for commercial use. The investment includes the construction of purpose built laboratory facilities which will be operational by mid 2008.

The model of the Platform has two sections: Operations and Market. The operations section is composed of R&D operations that include the development of new methodologies and protocols that are closely linked to plant hardening facilities and growing out facilities. The marketing section will focus on the sale of the outputs from the platform with the platform network having existing marketing links both locally and internationally.

The three entrepreneurs involved in the project are Peter Olsthoorn, Adam Struben and Rijk Danckwerts who are tasked with ensuring that the platform progresses according to the business plan. Technical support from experts in the field will be available to other entrepreneurs with thirty percent of the lab being allocated to external parties interested in utilising the platform Infrastructure.

### Up coming events.....

**Second International Proteomics Conference** - 3 to 5 March at the University of the Western Cape. For more details visit [www.scienceinafrica.co.za](http://www.scienceinafrica.co.za)

**7th Plant Breeders Symposium** - 10 to 13 March being held at Alpine Heath, Drakensberg. For more details contact Rae on [OelofseR@arc.agric.za](mailto:OelofseR@arc.agric.za)

**Bio 2008 USA** - 17 to 20 June San Diego, USA. For more information visit their website: [www.bio2008.org](http://www.bio2008.org)



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Department:  
Science and Technology  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### PlantBio Trust

PostNet Suite 201, Private Bag X6, Cascades, 3202

Tel: +27(0)33 8461980 Fax: +27(0)33 8461983

[www.plantbio.org.za](http://www.plantbio.org.za)

*The Root  
to the  
Future*

## Georgie Hawke leaves PlantBio

The end of 2007 saw PlantBio saying goodbye to Georgie Hawke as they wished her well in her new adventure.

Having spent three and half years at PlantBio, Georgie has decided to follow a new dream, taking a year-long break from biotechnology and sail to Canada with her partner.

Georgie began her career in biotechnology with a Bachelor of Science in Plant Pathology and Microbiology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 1993 and went on to complete her Masters degree in 2002. Later that same year she was involved in assisting Prof. Laing with compiling the proposal for The Department of Science and Technology to set up an

Innovation Centre and subsequently the business plan for PlantBio once the proposal was accepted. She spent a few months as a Project Manager with LIFE/ab and then joined PlantBio in June 2004 as our first Portfolio Manager. As one of the founder members of PlantBio, Georgie has always played a very active role in the Trust, contributing to the operational activities and managing a wide portfolio of projects with never ending enthusiasm and dedication.

Georgie, we will all miss you around the office, but will keep in touch as we watch your adventure unfold. May the seas always be calm and the winds behind you. Happy sailing...



Above:

Photo taken with Prof. Agre, our Distinguished Speaker Guest during his visit to South Africa in 2005

## DST/NRF Internship Programme 2007/2008

2008 will see the third consecutive year of the DST/NRF Internship Programme. The programme is one of the flagship projects developed to address the skills shortages identified within Government. Funded by the Department of Science and Technology and managed by the National Research Foundation the programme is part of a ten year plan for capacity development.

The twelve month long internships are open to graduates within the various science fields. The aim of which is to give students the chance to put the theory they have learnt at University into practice. Interns are exposed to the work environment and given the opportunity to develop their skills, which will assist them in gaining meaningful employment at the end of the programme, or to continue with their studies after the internship.

During the first year, 49 interns participated in the programme, of which

32 secured employments in their relevant fields. From last years programme, 71% of the interns have been able to secure posts within the science and technology fields. The 1st February 2008 will see over 90 young students beginning their mentorships at 19 different host institutions. This year the host institutions were given the opportunity to complete a needs analysis, thereby allowing the programme to streamline the qualifications and areas of speciality required. "We have watched the programme developing into a well organised initiative and seen the benefit to all involved with it", says Antonio Llobell, CEO of PlantBio Trust. PlantBio will be hosting three new interns this year, two of whom will be based at our offices in Pietermaritzburg and will be exposed to project management and business management. The third intern will be based at Sylvean Biotech, one of the projects funded by PlantBio.



Above:

Georgie and colleagues during a visit to Robyn Island, September 2007



Above:

Georgie and colleagues at PlantBio, December 2007