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Up Coming Events

- International Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ISSCT) Congress, Durban July/August 2007.
www.issct2007.com
- **Bio2Biz SA 2006**, Cape Town International Conference Centre 17—19 September 2007
www.bio2biz.org
- **Botrytis International Symposium**, Cape Town International Conference Centre 21—26 October 2007 <http://academic.sun.ac.za/botrytis2007>

PlantBio in good hands



The resignation of Professor Sagadevan Mundree left a big gap in the PlantBio Team which had to be filled with a candidate who had the necessary qualifications and experience, knew both the South African and International Biotechnology Industry and was passionate about the work being done by PlantBio and the Department of Science and Technology. The Board of Trustees formed a selection committee and the post was advertised. A number of suitably qualified candidates were selected from the applications and the a series of interviews were conducted.

Holding a PhD in Biological sciences in the field of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology with more than 12 years of research experience in senior management positions in the plant and microbial biotechnology field and a sound entrepreneur background, Professor Antonio Llobell, PlantBio's Chief Operating Officer was the successful candidate, who was duly appointed the new Chief Executive Officer. Antonio joined PlantBio Trust in April 2004 and has played an integral part in building the excellent team of staff members and the portfolio of projects funded by the trust. During the last three years, Antonio has contributed to the development of PlantBio and has been implemental in establishing common strategic initiatives while traveling extensively both within South African and abroad, representing not only PlantBio but the South African Biotech Industry.

It is with pleasure that the Board of Trustees and the Staff welcome Antonio as the new CEO. We are confident that with Antonio's expertise and guidance, PlantBio will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Deputy Minister of DST visits PlantBio

Mr Derek Hanekom, Deputy Minister of Science & Technology recently undertook visits to the Biotech Innovation Centres (BICs) to familiarize himself with the work being done at the BICs. He visited the PlantBio offices on the 22nd March 2007, together with Ben Durham, DST Director: Biotech Initiatives and Nthabiseng Maoela, DST Media Liaison Officer. During the visit the DST Delegation met with representatives of PlantBio's Board of Trustees and staff members, and was given a presentation by PlantBio's, Prof Antonio Llobell (acting CEO), and Mr Fidzani Nduna (Chief Financial Officer). Insight into the formation of the National Plant Biotechnology Innovation Centre which was established in 2004, the growth and successes achieved, policies that have been implemented and a

detailed brief on the project proposals that have been submitted and funded by PlantBio during the last three years. The afternoon proved to be a valuable interaction between all who attended.



Above: McLean Sibanda, Ben Durham, Derek Hanekom, & Nthabiseng Maoela

PlantBio participates in the Science Unlimited Expo

An estimated 40 000 visitors flocked to Tshwane Events Centre which was hosting one of the biggest science expos in South Africa. Learners, Educators and Parents from different provinces in South Africa were invited to attend the Science Unlimited Expo which was held from the 5th to 9th March.

A Section 21 Company, Salamax, was established and tasked specifically to launch and manage Science Unlimited under the leadership of Dr Richard Chernis as the project director.

With more than 20 exhibition stands and speakers from different science councils, this project proved to be a huge success impacting mostly learners from schools in rural

communities by fostering awareness of career paths and entrepreneurial opportunities offered in the fields of science.

PlantBio along with other Biotechnology Innovation Centres were invited to participate in this expo to promote science education and projects that were already functioning in the country. Science Unlimited was presented and sponsored mainly by DST (Department of Science and Technology) in partnership with SAASTA (South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement) Tshwabac, Gauteng North Chamber of Commerce and other organizations and companies.

Distinguished Speaker Programme



Dr Jaleh Daie, a leading businesswoman and academic from the USA recently visited South Africa at the Invitation of PlantBio Trust, LIFElab and Cape Biotech. During her visit, Dr Daie gave a series of lectures at Pretoria University, Witwatersrand University, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban Institute of

Technology, The Graduate School of Business (UCT), University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch. During her visit, Dr Daie also found time to meet with members of SA Wise, The International Woman's Foundation of South Africa and our Minister of Education, Ms Naledi Pando.

"The role of government and the business community, is critical," said Dr Daie. "Biotechnology is an industry that requires national vision and commitment. Bear in mind that the wrong policies can have the effect of stifling business and capital formation. Government can create the right incentives for investment and business to succeed. A major challenge for South Africa, is to overcome the lack of venture capital."

Some of the highlights of Dr Daie's visit was her interaction with school students during visits to the MTN Gateway Science Centre, Pinetown Girls High (Durban) and Nyonithwele High School in Edendale just outside Pietermaritzburg.

On behalf of the Biotech Innovation Centres involved in Dr Daie's visit, we would like to extend our appreciation to Dr Daie for taking time out of her very busy schedule to participate in our Distinguished Speaker Programme. To African Products, a very big thank you for so kindly assisting with sponsorship towards Dr Daie's travelling expenses.



Above: Dr Daie with students at UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus.

Dr Daie advised that the model for biotechnology success globally is one of building clusters of innovation. She believes that the Western Cape, which is the source of more than half South Africa's biotechnology start-up companies, has the potential to become a biotechnology cluster.



Above: (L to R) Georgie Hawke (PlantBio), Dr Anna Mokgokong (IWFSA), Dr Jaleh Daie, Dr Gwen Ramokgopa (Tshwane Executive Mayor), Anneliza Wepener (CEO)

Investing in South Africa's Cultivar Industry

PlantBio Trust recently invested 1,5 million rand in Citrogold South Africa (CGSA). To mark the investment an event with The Deputy Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Derek Hanekom as guest speaker was held at Neethlinghof Wine Estate in Stellenbosch.

"PlantBio's investment will help to create a effective tool to commercialize locally and internationally R&D outputs generated by South African breeders" said Antonio Llobell, acting CEO of PlantBio. The activities of CGSA and Biogold, a subsidiary of CGSA will benefit plant breeders and farmers as well as consumers in South Africa.



Above (left to right) Antonio Llobell, Grace Baloyi, Derek Hanekom, Bruce Cook

CGSA is a South African Cultivar Management Company, established in 1999 and based in Stellenbosch, acting as facilitators in the horticultural sector, they liaise between growers and researchers. Their focus is the commercial exploitation of a variety of crops by sourcing, evaluating, protecting and commercialising new plant material within South Africa and internationally. They assist growers to protect their Intellectual property, provides value-added business and marketing support which includes branding and trade marking, thereby giving the growers collective strengths in the market. CGSA has acquired and licensed a number of specialty cultivars to South African growers, and has grown from having eight citrus varieties on their books three years ago to 148 varieties today, ranging from citrus to subtropical and ornamental crops. Having established a network of commercial and plant breeding partners in the Horticultural Industry around the world, this consortium has formed the basis for the formation of Biogold

International that has been founded to develop the international activities of CGSA.

Derek Hanekom pointed out that PlantBio's investment was indeed a "wise investment" in a company that provides what he called the "golden link between biotechnology innovation and the commercial development of the product. The critical ingredient in boosting exports is not waiting for a more favourable rand, but to develop the value added products that give us a competitive advantage in the international market. This is what CGSA is doing."

With the commercial activities of both CGSA and Biogold, the companies will be in a very strong position to maintain the global competitiveness of South African agriculture and the globalization of a homegrown South African business concept.

Plant breeding and poverty alleviation are strategic areas targeted by PlantBio, and their investment in CGSA will have a vast impact in direct and indirect job creation and will also provide scope for Black Economic Empowerment in the agricultural sector.

Bruce Cook, CEO of CGSA has an ambitious vision for his company. "I want to see the horticultural industry grow by 25% because of our influence," he said. "We expect to see 30 000 new jobs created in this industry in the next four years. And we will ensure that 30% of all hectareage planted with our varieties are for BEE projects. New entrants to horticulture need to have access to leading edge technology if they are to be successful."

CGSA is also involved in the development of crops for biofuels and biofertilisation. As Antonio Llobell, Acting CEO of the Pietermaritzburg-based PlantBio, pointed out: "Poverty alleviation through the creation of jobs is imperative to the future of South Africa. PlantBio's vision of developing a world class biotech sector in South Africa is brought one step closer by a company such as CGSA that takes research into the real markets, to the consumers."



Science Skills Seminar

The 2007 Sasol Science Festival which is held annually in Grahamstown was packed, offering young participants a wide range of science and technologies with multiple opportunities to see, hear, feel and dismiss the notion that science is boring. While the Monument theatre was abuzz with the festival, the British Council (SA) hosted a science communication workshop in which Ms Masego Mokgoro from PlantBio was one of the 20 participants invited to take part. This dynamic group of people ranged from Journalists, Exhibitors and Scientists shared some of their expertise and the challenges they are faced with in reaching and educating the public about importance of science and technology. One of the highlights was when Dr Derek Fish gave an exciting presentation on physics with the theme "physically fit" *the science of sport* one of the tools/methods that can be used in making science and technology relevant to learners and the general public.

National Science Week

The 14th to 18th May was National Science Week and the Department of Education went all out to encourage and assist schools to promote science.

PlantBio was invited to participate in the National Science Week Programme at the MTN Gateway Science Centre in Durban. A very busy schedule was arranged with over 66 schools from in and around the Durban area visiting the centre. A number of exhibitions stands hosted by the local academic institutions and businesses were available for the students to visit and ask questions. A series of lectures and demonstrations were held throughout the week exposing the students to the exciting world of science. Ms Grace Baloyi, a Portfolio Manager at PlantBio gave two inspiring talks during which she told her listeners that through determination and hard work there are a host of exciting careers available to them through science. Students were also given free time to test out the science games at the Centre. A big thank you to Hareh, Candice and their team for all their hard work putting together a wonderful programme, and to the Department of Education for assisting with transport for the students.



Students at the MTN Gateway Science

The Junior Science Academy in Pietermaritzburg also took advantage of National Science Week and hosted approximately 250 students at the Olwazini Discovery Centre which is situated at the Golden Horse Casino. Grade 11 and 12 students from different schools in the Pietermaritzburg area attended a fun filled morning which included a tour of the Science Centre, exhibition tables, talks from University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, Amalgamated Beverage Industries, and PlantBio. Prof. Davis ended the talks with a hands on demonstration highlighting some of the fun which can be had with science. Thanks go to the Olwazini Discovery Centre, the speakers who gave their time, and to Lindelani and his team at the Junior Science Academy who even provided a light snack for everyone. Well done.



Students arriving at the Olwazini Discovery Centre

Prof. Davis with his "fun side of Science" demo





Bio2Biz SA 2007 Conference Highlight

The 4th Annual Bio2Biz SA 2007 Conference will be held at the Cape Town International Conference Centre from the 17th to 19th September 2007.

Topics to be discussed:

Developing biotech industry in developing countries
Biologics / vaccines
Drug discovery
Clinical trials/ regulatory affairs
Commercialization of IP
Business development
Incubators
Plant biotechnology
Wine / food biotechnology
Environmental biotechnology/biosafety
Global health
Bioinformatics
Omics platform
Overcoming challenges for commercializing in HED
Entrepreneurship in biotech
Bioethics/ stem cells/ tissue bank
Funding streams

TT100 AWARDS DINNER

A special highlight of the conference is the TT100 Opening Gala Dinner which will be held on Monday, 17 September 2007. This event celebrates the Biotechnology and Life Science qualifiers for the Technology Top 100 Awards program. The evening is to award companies who contribute to the wealth of South Africa's technology expertise and business acumen for international success. For further information kindly contact michelle@nbn.ac.za or Genevieve.Davis@capebiotech.co.za



For further information and registration visit www.bio2biz.org