COMPANY *NEWS*

Green Chemistry Award

For the second year running Dow AgroSciences LLC has received one of the US Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards. Last year it was for spinosad—this year it is for Sentricon termite colony elimination system, which makes use of a baiting system based on very small amounts of the insecticide hexaflumuron only when and where termites are present. Sentricon was launched in the USA by Dow in 1995 and has so far been used to protect about 500,000 structures from damage caused by subterranean termites. International sales are also well developed in Australia, France, Spain and Japan. The system is being used to protect the Statue of Liberty, the White House and Independence Hall, as well as the Senate Building in Rome and avenues of trees lining the streets of Paris. The Sentricon System uses a 3-step process to eliminate subterranean termites. Authorized technicians use Sentricon stations to monitor for evidence of termites in the soil around a structure. When termites are discovered, Sentricon uses the biology and natural behavior of termites, along with as little as one gram of active ingredient in Recruit II termite bait, to eliminate the colony. Once the colony is eliminated, the bait is removed and Sentricon stations remain installed for continuous monitoring of new colonies that may invade the area. For more information see http://www.dowagro.com/

Novartis GM offer

Novartis is offering its novel gene marker system called Positech which is being tested on maize, wheat, barley, sugar beet and vegetables. Existing marker technologies often use antibiotic-resistant genes linked to the gene to be inserted, but this technique has been widely criticised. The Positech system works by linking a gene that encodes for the enzyme phosphomannose isomerase (PMI), which converts mannose-6-phosphate to fructose-6-phosphate, to the gene to be inserted. Many plants, including crops such as maize and sugar beet, are naturally unable to use mannose as an energy source, but are able to use fructose. So, when grown in a medium containing mannose, only those plants that have been successfully modified are able to survive and grow. The company is already developing new strains of maize and wheat using Positech and has licensed it to more than 100 academic and industry research laboratories around the world that are developing higher-yielding and healthier food crops. It will not charge a royalty fee on any crops developed using Positech that are then sold to subsistence farmers in the developing world (http://www.cp.novartis.com/)

Aventis to sell isoproturon business to Griffin

Aventis CropScience has signed an agreement to sell the isoproturon business it inherited from AgrEvo to Griffin LLC (the joint venture between Griffin Corporation and DuPont). The sale has been approved by the authorities who demanded the sale of the cereal herbicide as a condition for approving the merger of Hoechst and Rhone-Poulenc as Aventis. Griffin will also receive the distribution rights to a number of ready-to-use mixes based on isoproturon and Aventis CropScience's other active ingredients, fenoxaprop and amidosulfuron. From Autumn 2000, Griffin will market the products throughout the 15 European Union countries. Aventis CropScience will continue making and selling the former Rhone-Poulenc range of isoproturon-based cereal herbicides in major European markets.

Sales prior to Syngenta merger

…Zeneca to divest acetochlor business

In response to concerns expressed by the European Commission and the US Federal Trade Commission, Zeneca Agrochemicals plans to divest its global acetochlor herbicide business, including its straight acetochlor products and acetochlor and atrazine mixtures.

…Novartis to sell its global Flint (trifloxystrobin) business

This decision is primarily based on the conditions imposed by the US antitrust authorities in view of the planned merger by Novartis' agrochemicals division with Zeneca to form Syngenta. Novartis employs 90 staff at its Flint strobilurin plant at Muttenz in Switzerland.

GM-contaminated seed compensation

Advanta Seeds UK, a joint venture between Zeneca Agrochemicals and Cosun, a Dutch food ingredient manufacturer, has agreed to pay compensation to over 500 farmers, after conventional oil seed rape seeds supplied by the company were found to be contaminated with GM rape seed. Advanta has set up an advisory panel consisting of independent agricultural advisers and professional loss adjusters to determine the level of compensation.

BASF takeover of Cyanamid complete

On 1 July 2000, BASF completed the $3.9 bn takeover of the Cyanamid agricultural products business of American Home Products Corporation (AHP), a company headquartered in Madison, New Jersey. This purchase doubles BASF's crop protection products business and moves it up into the ranks of the world's top three leading manufacturers of crop protection products. This follows approval of the EU Commission. In June, the waiting period under the Hart-Scott-Rodino pre-merger notification statute expired without any action by the U.S. antitrust agencies.

Zeneca and 'golden rice'

Zeneca Agrochemicals has joined forces with Greenovation, a plant biotechnology company, to bring vitamin A enriched rice to the developing world. The rice, known as 'golden rice', has been genetically engineered to contain high levels of beta-carotene, a precursor of vitamin A. It was developed last year by European researchers, led by Ingo Potrykus from the Institute of Plant Sciences, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, and Peter Beyer from the Centre for Applied Biosciences, University of Freiburg, Germany. Under the terms of the agreement, Zeneca Agrochemicals, which has contributed to the golden rice project since 1996, will explore commercial opportunities for sales of golden rice to the developed world, where it can be marketed as a health food, but will also provide regulatory, advisory and research expertise to assist in making the rice freely available in developing countries.

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