

## Aventis CropScience to be reorganised

Aventis CropScience has announced that it will be carrying out a reorganisation of its crop protection R&D over the next 2 years, progressively grouping activities together in Lyon-Décines, France, and Frankfurt, Germany. The discovery of new molecules and formulations will be concentrated in Frankfurt, which will thus host the corresponding activities from Lyon-La Dargoire, France, and Ongar, UK. The crop protection development activities will be grouped together on the Lyon-Décines site (CRIT). Décines will thus progressively receive development activities transferred from Lyon-La Dargoire, from Frankfurt and from the UK (process chemistry from Hauxton and environmental chemistry from Ongar). The Sophia Antipolis centre, France, specialising in toxicology, will remain an integral part of the R&D organisation. The reorganisation and concentration process is planned to be accomplished by Summer 2002. For more information on Aventis visit the Web Site <http://www.aventis.com>.

## Aventis suspends Bt corn seed sales

Aventis CropScience has suspended sales of its StarLink genetically modified corn seed, because of safety concerns. StarLink is approved for use in animal feed but not for human consumption because of concerns over allergic reactions. It was found in Taco Bell taco shells in mid-September 2000. Distributor Kraft Foods has withdrawn the product from the market. This then led to the recall of a number of other brands of taco shells, tortillas, and snack chips, made with yellow corn. StarLink contains a gene from *Bacillus thuringiensis* and produces an insecticidal protein called Cry9C. Kraft Foods and the Grocery Manufacturers of America (GMA) are calling for fundamental regulatory changes, including a procedure for testing for transgenes in crops and processed food and a mandatory review of all new biotech crops by the appropriate agencies before seeds are marketed. The recall of StarLink seed is expected to result in compensation of \$90-100 M or more.

## BASF and DowAgroSciences have announced agreement

BASF and Dow AgroSciences have signed an agreement which will significantly increase the availability of the Clearfield Production system imidazolidone herbicide tolerance characteristic to the seed industry. DowAgroSciences gains the right to sublicense the trait in corn. It currently markets the trait through Mycogen Seed business unit. The company will now be able to produce and sub-licence the technology through Advanced AgriTraits LLC. Dow AgroSciences is developing a new range of broad-spectrum insecticidal products to complement Clearfield characteristics in corn.

## Novartis sells Flint to Bayer

Bayer is to acquire Novartis' Flint strobilurin fungicide product line for SFR 1.3 bn. The line is forecast to have sales potential of around \$250 M/y. The transaction will include production facilities in Muttentz (Switzerland) including intellectual property, trade marks, registrations and know-how. The product is currently distributed in 35 countries, including Switzerland, the US, Great Britain, Norway, Belgium and South Africa. The acquisition will also affect the wheat fungicide Stratego which is expected shortly to gain approval in Germany. In addition, Bayer plans to acquire marketing rights for products such as the Alto fungicide (active ingredient cyproconazole) in the EU. Global launch is expected to be completed by 2003.

## Diversa expands research collaboration with Novartis

Diversa Corp announced an expanded collaboration agreement with Novartis Agribusiness Biotechnology Research Inc (Novartis). Novartis will use Diversa's proprietary evolution technologies to develop and optimize novel synthesis routes to crop protection chemicals. Under the terms of the agreement, Diversa will receive research payments, milestones and product royalties. Diversa's proprietary evolution technologies are used to modify DNA sequences to create improved products. Two of Diversa's complementary method-

ologies, Gene Site Saturation Mutagenesis and GeneReassembly, can overcome many of the limitations of traditional laboratory evaluation methods by increasing the number and types of sequence variations. The variations can then be screened, using Diversa's ultra-high throughput screening systems, to identify proteins with improved qualities, such as increased ability to work at high temperature, increased reaction rate, resistance to deactivating chemicals, or other properties important in a specific application. (<http://www.diversa.com>)

## Syngenta a reality

Novartis and AstraZeneca shareholders approved the merger of their agrochemicals businesses to form the 61:39 joint venture Syngenta at a meeting held on 11 October 2000. Shareholders of both partners and the European Commission have given their approval, but the transaction still requires approval from the antitrust authorities in the US. The merger will create the largest pesticides group worldwide. Pro-forma turnover of Syngenta will amount to \$7.3 bn and cost-savings are predicted at \$525 M/y through restructuring of the agrochemicals segment within 3 years. The cost of the merger estimated at \$900 M will be spread over a 4-year period. Syngenta's shares were floated on the Swiss Stock Exchange in mid-November 2000.

## Snippets

...Aventis CropScience will sell its carbetamide and dimefuron herbicide active ingredients to agrochemical firm Feinchemie Schwebda of Eschwege, Germany. The divestiture includes Aventis CropScience's Legurame, Pradone, Dribble and Carbetamex brands, as well as manufacturing, registrations and formulations activities.

...Novartis Crop Protection Inc. is voluntarily cancelling indoor uses of diazinon, due to the high cost of collecting information requested by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), especially on skin absorption. The EPA wanted Novartis to provide additional data after concluding a preliminary risk assessment of the product.

Please send any contributions to the NEWS sections in *Pesticide Outlook* to Hamish Kidd, The Royal Society of Chemistry, Thomas Graham House, Science Park, Cambridge CB4 0WF. FAX +44 (0)1223 420247; email [KIDDH@RSC.ORG](mailto:KIDDH@RSC.ORG).