

Executive summary

The Rothamsted International BioMarket (www.BioProduct.info) has been held annually since 2000. It is a biotechnology transfer event that brings together and connects the many agrifood interest groups that are involved in applying new scientific advances to add value to food-related products and processes derived from plants and microbes.

A successful Specific Support Action application under the EC's Food Quality theme of FP6 provided support for the Rothamsted International BioMarket plus an associated web-portal, over the three years, 2004, 2005 and 2006 ('*BioProducts4Food*' - Contract No. CT-2004-505997). The aim was to promote and facilitate the exploitation of European advances in plant and microbial biotechnology into products, processes and services to improve food quality and safety. Stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship in this fast-moving area can make a significant contribution to future European nutritional health and well-being. Special emphasis was given to providing a promotional platform for organisations involved in EC-supported FP5 and FP6 projects.

Each 3-day BioMarket Conference comprised a well-tested mix of partnering meetings, research and commercial talks, promotional 'pitches', posters and a reception, all of which are designed to encourage networking.

Some 400 delegates attended the three BioMarket Conferences (held in 2004, 2005 and 2006) where they engaged in more than 700 x 30-minute formal partnering meetings. The delegates represented small and large organizations, both in the public and private sectors, and their expertise reflected the often diverse skills that are necessary for successful innovation - from research, knowledge transfer, investment, patenting, through to business development, marketing and consumer surveys. Post-event surveys of delegates showed a high level of satisfaction with the partnering format. Although the business deals arising from these meetings were not quantifiable due to commercial confidentiality, informal discussions with delegates revealed that several partnerships forged at the BioMarket will lead to profitable business ventures in the food and associated sectors.

The Conference was complemented by the setting-up of an associated free interactive web-portal. The aim here was to provide supplementary year-round networking service for those in the European plant and microbial biotechnology community offering - and seeking - expertise and facilities. Registration was free, thanks to EC financial support. More than 850 public and private sector organisations from over 50 countries have registered on the site database, which also provided an e-alerting and news service. The value of the portal was further

enhanced by the inclusion of a database of new discoveries (over 60). The portal therefore provided a useful forum for the exchange of innovative ideas between scientists and those in commerce.

Research on improved crops and raw materials, new ingredients and new processing methods, coupled with biotechnological advances, is leading to the development of healthier and safer foods and improved nutrition. High quality well integrated research will continue to underpin progress in these areas and will be greatly helped by collaboration between academia and industry across Europe and beyond. *BioProducts4Food* provided an opportunity to foster these contacts and to match complementary expertise, resources and business acumen.

Linking research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the biosciences sector is of the highest priority to Rothamsted Research - and to the EC - and was the catalyst for originally launching the BioMarket series in 2000. Building on this experience, *BioProducts4Food* has provided a focal point for dissemination of research results from EC-supported and other food-related projects and has helped to stimulate their commercial exploitation.