

# Australia working with India to progress biotechnology

*Australian and Indian biotech companies and research institutes are working together to progress the industry. AusBiotech explains the current collaborations between the two countries and additional opportunities for growth.*



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The global industry of biotechnology has been in a rapid growth phase around the developed world – providing solutions to health problems, life-threatening pandemics, food shortages and, more recently, climate change. While the impacts of the global financial crisis on biotechnology developments are still largely speculative, there is little doubt that supportive governments and sympathetic public policy are key.

The Australian biotechnology industry has worked diligently to become the sixth-largest biotechnology industry globally, making Australia an excellent country in which to conduct clinical trials. With India's track record of fast growth, the largest offering of FDA-approved manufacturing facilities outside the US and strong government support with its National Biotechnology Strategy, there are significant opportunities for India and Australia to work together.

***'India and Australia have complementary strengths and we need to work together to leverage off those strengths for the good of both nations' industries.'***

## CREATING CONNECTED NETWORKS

AusBiotech, Australia's biotechnology industry organisation, led two business missions to India recently. More than 30 companies and universities participated in a program of business seminars, site visits and networking events in Hyderabad and Bangalore.

AusBiotech is the Chair and Secretariat for BioNet Asia Pac, which was launched in 2007. BioNet Asia Pac is a network of 10 countries: India, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Australia. Corporate and institutional members have access to a member website that details the biotechnology companies in each country. The group works to centralise opportunities and strengths from the region into a connected network.

## NEW GLOBAL ALLIANCES

Of the 255 alliances announced in 2008 between Australian biotech/medical technology firms, 70% were with overseas partners and 32 of those with partners in Asia. The increased proportion of international alliances reflects the need for globalisation in the industry to succeed in the market.

### Examples of deals include:

- a Memorandum of Understanding between Zydus Cadila (Indian healthcare leader) and Symbion for a manufacturing joint venture for construction and operation of manufacturing facilities in India
- Indian diversified major, ITC Ltd acquired the Australian agri-biotech company, Technico Pty Ltd, as part of its strategy to strengthen its foods business
- Mumbai-based Ipca Laboratories acquired the Australian formulation product dossier registration-cum-distribution company (now Ipca Pharma Australia BTY) to enable it to register formulations in Australia.



Australian and Indian universities have a significant number of research collaborations.



India has the largest offering of FDA-approved manufacturing facilities outside the US offering significant opportunities for India and Australia to work together.

More recently, the Australian company, Alchemia, with its marketing and manufacturing partner, Dr Reddy's, have filed Alchemia's generic fondaparinux for approval (ANDA) with the FDA. If approved, this will be the first generic version of Arixtra (sold by GlaxoSmithKline) to market and may be available by the end of the year.

### BANGALORE BIO EVENT

In June this year, Austrade, which seeks to assist and advance trade and investment, worked with the Victorian Government to invite interested Australian companies to participate in Bangalore Bio. The event was organised by the Government of Karnataka to promote the inherent strengths of the Indian biotech sector.

Austrade's India Biotechnology Team assisted Australian biotechnology companies interested in exhibiting or visiting Bangalore Bio with a vast array of support services.

India is seen as a market which offers a lot of potential for Australian biotechnology companies. The two countries have complementary strengths and we need to work together to leverage off those strengths.

### RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

Australian and Indian universities have a significant number of research collaborations including programs at The University of Melbourne, Monash University, the Queensland University of Technology and the Queensland Institute of Medical Research.

Australia's Deakin University entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with India's Biocon, for a joint multi-disciplinary research focused on biotechnology and biosciences. The territories covered in the MOU include the establishment of the Deakin Research Institute in Bangalore; and Deakin, through its Metabolic Research Unit, will undertake research in the areas of metabolic diseases on behalf of the company.

AusBiotech is Australia's Biotechnology Industry Organisation, representing over 3000 members across the human health, agricultural, medical device, bioinformatics, environmental and industrial sectors in biotechnology. Its national conference, AusBiotech 2009, will be held in October in Melbourne, Australia. For more details, see [www.ausbiotech.org](http://www.ausbiotech.org)

### AUSTRALIA-INDIA STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND

The Australian Government has an established commitment to early research in biotechnology, as well as the development of research relationships with India. The Australia-India Strategic Research Fund is a joint initiative of the Australian and Indian Governments. It is Australia's largest bilateral research fund, providing \$20 million over five years from 2006-07.

In the most recent round of funding in April 2009, \$4 million was awarded to 15 collaborative projects on topics ranging from malaria vaccines and the impact of global warming on agriculture to nanotechnology, medical diagnostics, nutraceuticals, and micro-electronic devices and materials.

#### Projects include:

- establishing an Australian-Indian collaboration on gravitational wave astronomy
- assessing the impact of rainwater harvesting on the regional hydrological balance in the Arawali foothills region of India.

### HIGH QUALITY SCIENCE IN ROBUST REGULATORY REGIME

AusBiotech is drawing the attention of Indian investors to opportunities in Australia, as one of the lowest-cost business locations in the industrialised world. Australia offers high quality science, capacity for international partnerships and a transparent and efficient regulatory regime. With the financial downturn, Australia has seen its biotechnology stocks drop to value-for-money prices, with many stock analysts declaring them to be significantly undervalued.

Australia trains large numbers of Indian nationals in its biotech programs which may assist with India's challenge in accessing scientists trained in biotechnology and high-tech areas.

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In the Asia Pacific region, strong foundations for development are crucial to the continued success of the biotech sector, with strong intellectual property (IP) protection, robust regulatory regimes and support for innovative start-up companies.

### OPPORTUNITIES IN BOTH COUNTRIES

AusBiotech CEO, Dr Anna Lavelle, says: "We have been showcasing the opportunities of companies in both countries for several years and believe that the best is yet to come.

"The greatest increase in engagement occurs after meeting partner organisations at conferences, like Bio Bangalore or the AusBiotech conference in Australia, where business-matching and personal relationships are central to partnering," says Dr Lavelle. ■