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Press release

Korean Crop Functional Genomics Center and CropDesign establish TraitMill collaboration

GENT, BELGIUM, September 14th 2004 - The Korean Crop Functional Genomics Center ("CFGC") (Seoul, Korea) and CropDesign N.V. ("CropDesign") (Gent, Belgium) announced today, that they have entered into a multi-year collaboration aimed at the development of novel agronomic traits. CFGC, based on an extensive program of genomics research conducted in rice and other plants, has identified a number of candidate trait genes and has obtained initial proof of concept data. Under the collaboration, these genes will now be tested in CropDesign's rice TraitMill with a view to systematically validate candidate trait genes directly in an important cereal crop. CropDesign will receive certain research fees and will exploit the technology, outside Korea, in a number of crops including corn and rice. CFGC will exploit the traits in Korea as well as in a range of other crops worldwide.

Professor Yang Do Choi, Director of CFGC, commented: "We are excited about the collaboration with CropDesign. The TraitMill is a unique platform for rapid and systematic high-throughput trait validation in a major crop. We believe this will allow us to translate the exciting scientific results that we have already obtained into real proprietary traits for application in Korea and beyond."

Dr. Karl-Peter Schlichting, CEO of CropDesign, added: "We are very pleased with the partnership with CFGC. Korea has invested significant resources in genomics research and CFGC has delivered exciting proof of concept data. Together we can make the step towards new commercial traits for major crops. I am convinced that this public-private partnership will help both parties to achieve their goals."

CFGC runs target-oriented basic research projects in the fields of plant functional genomics, crop transformation, and plant molecular breeding. It belongs to the 21st Century Frontier R&D Program developed by the Korean Ministry of Science and Technology to boost national competitiveness in science and technology, improve the quality of life, and benefit humanity.

CropDesign uses its rice TraitMill platform for applied genomics to discover traits for the improvement of corn, rice and other cereal crops in both in-house and partnered programs. The company's proprietary lead pipeline is focused on enhancing yield and on improving tolerance to abiotic stress in corn.

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