



## Press Release

GENT, BELGIUM, April 17, 2003 – Marubeni Corporation and CropDesign today announced that Marubeni will act as a representative for certain CropDesign technologies in the Japanese market.

“We have been very impressed with CropDesign’s TraitMill”, said Yoshitaka Mizutani, Manager, Chemicals Development and Project Dept., Marubeni “Their impressive rice-based plant biotechnology platform has already delivered a number of genes that are well underway to impact the agronomic performance of cereal crops.

CropDesign’s platform however has great potential for several other applications of biotechnology such as improvement of plant species for industrial applications and the production in plants of high-value-added compounds. Such applications of biotechnology represent great opportunities for the Japanese and Asian markets. While there is still considerable R&D work to be done before these new developments will reach the Asian consumer, we want to build our presence in those technologies that will shape our future. We are therefore pleased to represent a company with cutting-edge technology like CropDesign.”

“We have visited Japan and Asia many times”, said Dr. Herman Van Mellaert, CEO of CropDesign. “We have already started to build successful business relationships around our rice platform and cereal improvement traits. However, there are too many opportunities in this market to fully develop those independently. The knowledge of Marubeni of the Japanese market in particular and the Asian markets in general is of great value to us. As a young company we are pleased to work together with an established trading-house with strong traditions such as Marubeni. Together we can define the needs of Asian customers, define appropriate biotechnology solutions and implement them for the benefit of all involved.”

CropDesign, based in Gent, Belgium delivers plant biotechnology traits. The company’s trait discovery program is powered by the TraitMill” applied genomics platform that closes the gap between genomics and the development of real traits in real crops. In-house product development is focused on yield enhancement in cereals, thus addressing the most desirable improvement of the world’s most important crops. The company is further applying its TraitMill”

---



**cropdesign**

technology with a view to develop other agronomic, quality and industrial traits in a range of collaborations with industrial partners. Founded in 1998, CropDesign employs over 75 people at its research facilities in Gent.

Marubeni Corporation, founded in 1858, is a leading Japanese general trading house (Sogo-Shosha), ranked as the 25th largest company in the 2002 Global 500 by Fortune magazine. Marubeni operates domestic, import/export, offshore trade and investment activities, which range from the development of natural resources to the retail marketing of finished products and conducts these operations through a worldwide business network more than 200 overseas office and 600 affiliates. Marubeni has been one of the most aggressive Japanese trading companies in investing in emerging industries such as the biotech and biochemical industries. Within the biotech industry, Marubeni has established an especially strong presence by creating a subsidiary called BErevno Corp.

**For further information, please contact:**

Herman Van Mellaert, CEO  
CropDesign N.V.  
Tel: +32 9 241 50 80  
Fax: +32 9 241 50 89  
E-mail: [Cropdesign@cropdesign.com](mailto:Cropdesign@cropdesign.com)  
<http://www.cropdesign.com>

Yoshitaka Mizutani, Manager, Chemicals Development and  
Project Dept  
Marubeni Corporation  
Tel: +81 3 3282 3452  
Fax: +81 3 3282 2455  
E-mail: [mizutani-yos@marubeni.com](mailto:mizutani-yos@marubeni.com)  
<http://www.marubeni.com/>

---