



Press Release

GENT, BELGIUM, April 17, 2003 – Plantech Research Institute, a Mitsubishi Group company, and CropDesign N.V. (Belgium) announced today that Plantech Research Institute is evaluating CropDesign technology for applications in the area of phyto-remediation. Phyto-remediation refers to the use of plants to extract and sequester soil pollutants such as heavy metals.

In Japan, cadmium-contaminated soils are a serious problem. Large areas of farming land near old refining factories and mining sites have been polluted by cadmium through air and water, the contaminated acreage is estimated to be more than 80,000 hectares.

CropDesign has made certain proprietary gene constructs and transformed plants with altered growth characteristics available to Plantech Research Institute for evaluation of heavy metal uptake.

Dr. Watanabe, President and CEO of Plantech Research Institute said, “The Japanese government has made a serious issue of a new codex lowering the standards for cadmium contamination in almost all of the agricultural crops. This increases the need to find an ecological and cost-effective alternative to chemical treatment for cleaning up contaminated soils. Our initial assessment of CropDesign’s gene technology looks promising. Cleaning contaminated soils is an important problem for our country and represents a large business opportunity for our company. We are pleased to have the opportunity to assess this plant biotechnology based approach as part of a comprehensive set of solutions.”

Dr. Herman Van Mellaert, CEO of CropDesign added, “The expertise and commitment that exists within the Mitsubishi group of companies makes Plantech Research Institute an ideal partner to assess CropDesign’s technology as part of an integrated environmentally friendly solution for this important ecological problem. This is a good example of how we can successfully leverage traits discovered in our agronomic research programs in a totally different area.”

Plantech Research Institute based in Yokohama, Japan is a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Chemical Company(100% investment share). The company has successfully developed the technology of protoplast breeding, cell fusion and genetic engineering of rice and rapeseed. Now, the company has started doing research and development for cleaning up cadmium contaminated soils of agricultural fields by making use of hyper-accumulating plants.

CropDesign N.V., 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



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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™ 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.

For further information, please contact:

Johan Cardoen
VP, Business Development
CropDesign N.V.
Tel: +32-9-241-50-86
Fax: +32-9-241-50-89
E-mail: Cropdesign@cropdesign.com
<http://www.cropdesign.com>

Akira Taniguchi
General Manager
Business Planning
Plantech Research Institute
Tel: +81-45-963-3521
Fax: +81-45-962-7492
E-mail: pri0014@cc.m-kagaku.co.jp
<http://www.plantech-net.co.jp>
