

Letter to the Editor



CENTRE FRANCO-POLONAIS DE BIOTECHNOLOGIE DES PLANTES
CENTRUM POLSKO-FRANCUSKIE BIOTECHNOLOGII ROŚLIN

Warsaw, January 12, 2004
Professor Liliana Konarska,
Editor,
Acta Biochimica Polonica
L. Pasteura,
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Dear Profesor Konarska,

We wish to bring to your attention the international meeting on the “Molecular Biology of Plants, its Programs and Perspectives in the Enlarged European Union”, held in Warsaw on November 21-23, 2003. The meeting initiated by Professor Francois Gros (Secretary of the French Academy of Sciences) and organized under the auspices of the Polish-French Center for Plant Biotechnology gathered 40 speakers from 25 European countries. The lectures, presenting the contemporary state of research in this field, emphasized the current break through, made possible by combining physiological observations with genomic data.

The participants decided to call the attention of the scientific community and institutions responsible for the development of science to the new possibilities created by synergy in research on plant biology within the future European scientific establishment. This resulted in the memorandum prepared by a study section and accepted by the participants of the meeting. We consider it worthy of publication in *Acta Biochimica Polonica*.

Professor Włodzimierz Zagórski

Professor Stanisław Lewak

WARSAW MEMORANDUM ON THE STATUS OF PLANT MOLECULAR BIOLOGY PROGRAMMES AND PERSPECTIVES IN AN ENLARGED EUROPE

The European Commission (EC) and the Member states (MSs) have recently undertaken a number of initiatives to implement the so-called “Lisbon Strategy” aimed at creating a European Area as a tool for the development of a research-based economy. The Research and Trade Potential and human resources of the Accessing Countries (ACs) – when appropriately valorized – could represent a significant factor for such an outcome, particularly in the domain of excellence, complementing the expertise of the MSs. One such domain is plant molecular biology, a relatively strong element in the ACs, where agriculture is traditionally important. The joint contribution of the plant science community in the MCs and ACs could be important for future advances of the European economy facing the challenge of modern US agriculture.

Agreeing with the identification of human health as major priority in the R&D strategies of the ELL we feel that the present structure of the 6th Framework Program limits the potentials for plant sciences. The competitiveness of European agriculture is universal and success in solving crucial environmental problems including adaptation to extreme climatic conditions would urge immediate actions from the EU to formulate a new vision for the role of plant research. The new policy can not neglect the importance of molecular breeding for the future of European agriculture and the significance of cultivars produced by gene technology. The present public concerns – if they do exist – in relation to commercialization of GMO products is largely generated by miss-information of public. Plant scientists in the EU are ready to help educational programs to popularize the advantages in the use of recombinant DNA technology to improve crops.

We are convinced that the Community should adopt an active, coordinating function also in basic, academic science to insure success in innovation and technology development. In these attempts the prospective European Research Council can serve as an organization to support excellence also in plant sciences.

Plant science is crucial for ensuring efficiency and quality of contemporary food production systems. Today as well as in the past this system has had to be flexible enough to absorb novel challenges of population growth, climate changes and reduced water supply. Overview of research going on in the European laboratories creates a number of avenues of research to be explored in the field of plant biology. This concerns biodiversity as well as novel discoveries on plant gene regulations, resistance to stresses (including water shortage) and diseases. This clearly shows the unexpected adaptive potential of plant systems, creating conditions for defining novel trends in modern biology emphasising molecular diagnostics and modern tools for sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture.

Scientists from both MSs and ACs are ready to participate in common efforts toward the development of a European strategy covering plant sciences. Such an initiative, under the authority of the EC advised by scientific organizations as such as EMBO or EPSO will be crucial for the contribution of the European plant science sector towards achieving the Lisbon Summit objective for Europe to be “the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010”.

Warsaw, November 23, 2003

On behalf of participants of the workshop on “Plant Molecular Biology Programmes and Perspective
in an Enlarged Europe”

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