

NEWS RELEASE

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PLANT- FACTORIES - THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF NEW DRUGS

*International Conference on plant-made pharmaceuticals opens Today in
Quebec City*

Quebec City, Quebec, Canada, March 17, 2003 – «AIDS, Hepatitis B, Diabetes, Cancer, and Cystic fibrosis are among a few of many diseases that will be treatable in the next 10 to 20 years with the use of plants that have been transformed in plant factories by diverse biotechnology procedures,» said Mr. François Arcand, President of the International Conference on plant-made pharmaceuticals which opened this morning in Quebec City.

Speaking to an audience of 400 scientists, scholars, professionals, and business executives of the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, agricultural, and governmental sectors, Mr. Arcand stressed the necessity for the scientific community to find innovative ways to develop new products and improve health amongst developed and Third-World countries.

«One day soon, someone you know will get an injection that treats Alzheimer's disease or swallow a red-tinted capsule that will prevent cholera,» said Mr. Arcand adding that people who will be receiving these new drugs will not know that the active ingredient contained in their medicine was produced by a renewable, living plant-factory such as alfalfa or tomato.

«Plant-factory describes the growing, harvesting and processing of genetically engineered plants, with the object of producing biopharmaceuticals,» said Mr. Arcand. The idea is to use these molecular crops as biological factories to generate drugs difficult or expensive to produce in any other way, he added. Combining plant genetics, molecular biology and gene delivery, scientists take genes from other sources, such as microorganisms, and splice them into the plant's genome. During normal growth these genetically engineered plants synthesize 'recombinant' proteins, which can be Therapeutics, Vaccines, Blood substitutes, Enzymes or Diagnostics which are then extracted from the crop. These transgenic techniques are already being used to produce vaccines for some animal diseases, such as mink enteritis virus. Many others are at advanced stages, such as measles vaccine in Australian potatoes and drugs to fight cancer, heart disease, infant diabetes and Crohn's disease. Therapeutic

Proteins, edible vaccines, 'plantigens' and 'plantibodies' are already in Clinical trials.

«Although plant-made pharmaceuticals can be an answer to the scarcity of manufacturing resources for biopharmaceutical products, the use of transgenic plants offer many desirable attributes such as cost, scale, and safety,» said Mr. Arcand. He added that biopharmaceutical products containing transgenic plants could represent nearly 35% of pharmaceutical sales before the year 2010. This represents a market of more than \$US 20 billion.

«The growing complexity, demand, and cost of the new generation of drugs makes it urgent for scientists to develop new biologic products,» said Mr. Arcand. «Affordable recombinant blood proteins that can make the management of the blood supply safe and simpler, as well as plant-made edible vaccines that could be administered far more easily than conventional vaccines are just a few examples of how science can help the least developed nations to access better health,» he added.

«Some 30 biotechnology companies and several public laboratories are presently involved in the research and development of plant-made pharmaceuticals. «Making plants for medicine is not an easy task and requires large amounts of capital and scientific knowledge. As the biopharmaceutical and pharmaceutical industries are highly regulated in all countries worldwide, stringent containment and regulations will have to be adopted if we are to succeed in our endeavors. New guidelines are currently being developed for the testing and growth of plant-factories in Canada and the United States. On-going discussions with American and Canadian regulators are being held by industry representatives to ensure that human health products produced from plants are safe.»

Conference on Plant-Made Pharmaceuticals

Québec City, Qc, Canada, March 16-19, 2003

Conférence de Moléculaire pharmaceutique

Québec, Qc, Canada, 16-19 mars 2003

The 3rd Conference on Plant-made pharmaceuticals is held under the auspices of the International Molecular Farming Association which is based in Québec City. The Conference provides a unique meeting opportunity for biopharma and plant-based manufacturing companies. The event is an educational and business forum for individuals who are looking to gain a strategic overview and understand leading-edge trends in plant-made pharmaceuticals which comprise research and development, capital funding, manufacturing processes, and regulatory issues.

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