

Procarta Biosystems, the company spun-out of the John Innes Centre in 2007 to develop a technology designed to defeat antibiotic-resistant superbugs, has received significant seed funding. The Rainbow Seed Fund and the Icení Seedcorn Fund have provided £320,000 to allow Procarta to further develop its DNA decoy technique, which aims to restore antibiotic efficacy against resistant superbugs, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE).

Procarta's pioneering approach to combating the threat of superbugs is based on injectable DNA therapies, called Transcription Factor Decoys (TFDs). TFDs are short pieces of DNA which inactivate the resistance genes the bacteria need to counter antibiotics. This new funding will initially allow Procarta to develop TFDs that prevent resistance to vancomycin, the so-called antibiotic of last resort.

"We plan to be able to use this latest and valuable support to further validate the outstanding potential of our proprietary approach to combating resistant superbugs," said Procarta's Research Director, Dr Michael McArthur.

Mark White of the Rainbow Seed Fund said: "We have worked alongside the John Innes Centre and its commercialisation arm PBL for some time and have a high regard for their ability to spot promising commercial opportunities. In Procarta's case we were particularly impressed by the skills of the key people involved as well as the scale of the opportunity. In addition, we were attracted to the possibility of achieving a significant breakthrough in an important but somewhat neglected area of healthcare. There remains a lot of work to be done, but the venture holds a great deal of promise.

Procarta's unique technology can breathe new life into existing drugs and prolong the commercial usefulness of antibiotics and in doing so counter growing concern over the rise of drug-resistance in bacterial infections. The scientific founders, Dr. Michael McArthur and Professor Mervyn Bibb, hope to move to pre-clinical trials in 2009 with their first product, after which Procarta will work with pharmaceutical companies to bring it to market. Having established the proof of concept with vancomycin, Procarta plans to build a strong product pipeline by applying its proprietary technology to reinvigate the use of a broad range of valuable antibiotics.

"We are extremely excited about the promise of Procarta's technology, targeting as it does one of the most significant issues to hit the public healthcare system in the 21st Century," said a spokesman for Icení.

Procarta Biosystems will be moving its operations to the Norwich Bioincubator on 1st July 2008 and has also recently appointed Dr Nigel Crockett as Commercial Director. Dr Crockett has over 15 years of experience in the Pharma-biotech sector, especially in early stage R&D collaborations and licensing.

Note to Editors:

About John Innes Centre:

The John Innes Centre, Norwich, UK is an independent, world-leading research centre in plant and microbial sciences with over 800 staff. JIC carries out high quality fundamental, strategic and applied research to understand how plants and microbes work at the molecular, cellular and genetic levels. The JIC also trains scientists and students, collaborates with many other research laboratories and communicates its science to end-users and the general public. The JIC is grant-aided by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

About Plant Bioscience Ltd:

PBL develops innovative technologies from public and private sources worldwide - turning ideas into patented, scientifically validated and licensable technologies. PBL invests in building intellectual property protection, and develops technologies through proof-of-concept and prototype stage and licenses onwards to a wide variety of industry sectors. Its interests cover AgBiotech, Food / Nutrition, Microbiology, Biotechnology and related Life Science industries. PBL was formed in 1994, and is now jointly and equally owned by The John Innes Centre, The Sainsbury Laboratory, and the BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council).

About the Rainbow Seed Fund:

The Rainbow Seed Fund is an early stage technology venture capital fund with close links to the UK's leading centres of scientific research outside the universities. As well as the research centres attached to BBSRC (the parent of the John Innes Centre), the fund is linked with such major sites as the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire, the Babraham Institute in Cambridge and Porton Down in Wiltshire. It has a portfolio of 16 high tech companies engaged in a broad range of areas from advanced detection systems for counterterrorism through to medical devices for monitoring and management of cholesterol levels

About Icen:

The Icen Seedcorn Fund was established following a successful bid by a regional consortium of universities and institutes to the Department of Trade and Industry's University Challenge Fund and invests in the commercialisation of research results arising in partner academic institutions in the Eastern region of the UK such as the University of East Anglia, the John Innes Centre, the Institute of Food Research, the Sainsbury Laboratory, PBL and the University of Essex, through either the creation of new ventures or through licensing.