



SABC NEWS

August 29, 2003 No. 5

Congratulations to GBA for releasing their first wheat varieties. As if with a hotline to the big feller up there, the cool morning wind abated and the sun shone on GBA as its first three commercial wheat varieties were launched on Monday 25th August. The official launch of the wheat varieties Ruby, Sapphire and Shenton was by State Minister of Agriculture Kim Chance, accompanied by speeches from GBA CEO Dr Ian Edwards, and representatives of seed producers Plant Tech and Pioneer, and the Chairman of GBA. The new varieties have been produced in a short time, and represent a new era for Australian wheat breeding. The festivities were concluded with visits to the glasshouse and other facilities, with a BBQ lunch and refreshments, and ample time for discussion by the assembled representatives of the agricultural industry and research providers. We wish GBA well with their new wheats, and for continued support in the biotechnology sector.

Welcome to.....

Astrid Gaerdes who is doing five months traineeship at the ACNFP, working on the Stagonospora Project. She is from Emden, Germany and would like to make new friends.

Stewart Washer - "Pick of the Crop"

SABC researchers will be interested to hear that Stewart Washer, who did his Honours and PhD work nematode- plant relations in the Plant Biotechnology Research Group at the SABC, featured in a full page interview with Graeme O'Neill in Ag Biotech news this week.

Stewart founded Biowest, Biotest and co-founded Grain Biotech Australia at the SABC, and was then head hunted for the position of CEO of Celentis, the commercial arm of the AgResearch New Zealand (the largest of the Crown Research Institutes formed by the break-up of the equivalent of CSIRO in New Zealand).

"Australia - and Western Australia - lost one of its most dynamic young scientist-entrepreneurs" said

O'Neill. In fact Stewart is now in charge of 10 companies under the Celentis banner, five of which he has spun off in the last year.

I talked to Stewart at the AusBiotech meeting in Adelaide, and it is clear he is doing very well. Since he has been at Celentis, the annual company profits have increased from \$18 million to \$35 million.



Many of you will also know Stewart's wife Patti, who ran Biotest at the SABC, and has been running the commercialisation section of Auckland University since moving with Stewart to the land of the long white cloud. Patti is expecting a baby in two weeks time.

So, here is an example of what coming to the SABC to do Honours can lead to!

Mike Jones

Gossip from DAWA Annual Ball

Last Saturday night the Department of Agriculture Social Club held its annual ball at the Novotel Langley Hotel. The AgWA lab sent its finest delegates who showed the south perth mob how to really burn up the dance floor and how to clean out the dessert table.



Dancing Divas: Esther, Gabby, Fiona, Caroline

Congrats to Esther Walker for taking out one of the door prizes. Well done Lars, fresh off the plane from Holland, for staying awake most of the night!

By Gabby Devlin



Gabby guarding the cakes.

QUIZ CORNER

The barrel of a gun is exactly horizontal and pointed at a small target. Air resistance is negligible and the ground is level. If the target is dropped at the instant the bullet leaves the muzzle of the gun the bullet will:

1. Pass above the target.
2. Strike the target.
3. Miss the target by an amount which depends upon the distance from gun to target.
4. Pass below the target.
5. Strike the ground before the target does.

ANSWER TO LAST MONTHS QUESTION

The “fluttering” of a flag is an illustration of Bernoulli’s principle

GM Debate – what do you think?

Unfortunately with only 6 completed questionnaires received out of a potential 200 the responses do not give a comprehensive picture. We can conclude that those who responded were in favour of GM Crops, with some concern on the environment and who profits.

- A - Agree Strongly
- B - Agree
- C - Disagree
- D - Disagree Strongly
- E - Don't know/unsure

1. I believe GM crops could help provide cheaper food for consumers in Australia

Responses: 1 A, 4 B, 1 C

2. I am concerned about the potential negative impact of GM crops on the environment

Responses: 2 A, 1 B, 1 C, 2 D

3. I believe that GM crops could improve the prospects of Australian farmers by helping them to compete with farmers around the world

Responses: 6 A

4. I am worried that this new technology is being driven more by profit than by public interest

Responses: 1 A, 1 B, 3 D, 1 E

5. I would be happy to eat GM Food

Responses: 5 A, 1 B

6. I think GM crops could benefit the environment by using less pesticides and chemical fertilisers than traditional crops

Responses: 6 A

7. I think that some GM crops would mainly benefit the producers and not ordinary people

Responses: 4 B, 2 D

8. I don't think we know enough about the long term effects of GM food on our health

Responses: 1 B, 1 C, 3 D, 1 E

9. I believe that some GM non-food crops could have useful medical benefits

Responses: 5 A, 1 B

10. I am confident that the development of GM crops is being carefully regulated

Responses: 5 A, 1 E

11. I am worried that if GM crops are introduced it will be very difficult to ensure that other crops are GM-free

Responses: 1 A, 2 C, 3 D

12. I feel that GM interferes with nature in an unacceptable way

Responses: 1 C, 5 D

13. I believe that GM crops could benefit people in developing countries.

Responses 5 A, 1 E

Sequencing

Julie Lawrence will be looking after the sequencing while Frances is on maternity leave.

AUS BIOTECH 2003

Good turnout from SABC at Ausbiotech Conference

'Business is Booming in WA' was the slogan for the WA stand. The SABC was well represented at the recent Ausbiotech meeting in Adelaide - both on the WA stand (SABC, DAWA, Saturn, GBA, AgID, Ozgene, CHAGA) and in personnel (eg Keith Gregg, Mike Jones, Graham O'Hara, Caroline Jones, Doug Chamberlain, Mark Pitts). The SABC featured as one of the three invited presentations on biotechnology clusters and centres of excellence, as a good model for the university sector (MJ Photo), and did good business at the stand (photo). Ausbiotech represents the business end of biotech, a market segment that is expanding rapidly in Australia. The 2005 meeting will be in Perth, so have a think now about what may have commercial potential!

