

**Society Needs Biotech Innovation: Prof. Marc Van Montagu**  
Father of Genetic Modification of Crops felicitated by Avesthagen and ABLE

**January 8, 2009, India:** Renowned biotechnologist who co-discovered the gene transfer mechanism between *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* and plants and constructed the first chimerical plant gene, which resulted in the development of methods to alter *Agrobacterium* into an efficient delivery system for plant gene engineering was felicitated by AVESTHAGEN LIMITED and the Association of Biotech Led Enterprises (ABLE) on Wednesday.

Prof. Marc is also on the board of Avesthagen Limited and is a constant source of inspiration for the organisation. Dr Viloo Morawala Patell, founder and CMD, AVESTHAGEN LIMITED has worked with Prof Marc on several occasions.

Speaking at this felicitation Prof Marc said, "Society needs biotech innovation. Big companies can innovate only to a small extent; its start ups like Avesthagen and others that will bring a variety of innovation to the world." Speaking on the genetically modified crops in India he added, "Every region should have clear, local regulatory processes where crops are adapted and tested in local climatic conditions."

Dr. Viloo Morawala Patell, founder and CMD, AVESTHAGEN LIMITED added, "Prof Marc has been my source of inspiration. His model of innovation leading to applied research and resulting in company spin offs could be an ideal one for any company or research institution. We are very proud to have him on our board."

Prof Marc Van Montagu is the Chairman of the Institute of Plant Biotechnology for Developing Countries (IPBO), Department of Molecular Genetics, Ghent University. Before becoming chair of IPBO in

1999, Marc Van Montagu was full-professor and director of the genetics laboratory at Ghent University, as well as scientific director of the genetics department at the Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology (VIB). He helped start Plant Genetic Systems Inc. in 1982 and founded the biotech company Crop Design in 1998. PGS was eventually bought by AgrEvo/Hoechst in 1996 whereas Crop Design was recently acquired by BASF Plant Science

Known for his discovery (with J. Schell) of the gene transfer mechanism between *Agrobacterium* and plants, Dr. Van Montagu went on to develop methods of altering *Agrobacterium* to create an efficient delivery system for producing genetically engineered plants. He also contributed to the understanding of the molecular mechanisms of how plant cells proliferate and differentiate, and of plant responses to abiotic stresses such as intense light, ozone, and drought. His work with poplars resulted in engineering trees with improved pulping qualities, and he was able to construct the first transgenic crops resistant to insect pests and tolerant to novel herbicides.



## **About Avesthagen Limited**

[www.avesthagen.com](http://www.avesthagen.com)

Avesthagen Limited is India's leading integrated systems biology platform company that focuses on achieving convergence of food, pharma and population genetics leading to predictive preventive and personalized healthcare. It employs 600 people worldwide and is headquartered in Bangalore. Avesthagen Limited has established world class, state-of-the-art laboratory facilities in Bangalore. It began business operations in 2001. Since its inception Avesthagen has grown into one of India's leading healthcare technology group in India, and its activities include, in addition to its agric-biotechnologies product pipeline, development of clinically validated botanical bioactive, derived from Indian medicinal plants, as well as the development of a pipeline of bio-similar drugs. Avesthagen Limited has four strategic business units: biopharmaceuticals, innutrition, bioAgriculture and Science & Innovation. Its partners include multiple top 10 global companies in each of its fields of research. Avesthagen Limited collaborates at every stage in the value chain with appropriate partners, both public and private, for access to and exchange of technology and overall commercial expertise to leverage the 'India advantage'.

bioAgriculture focuses on stress resistance and nutrition enhancement in plants. It hosts two wholly owned subsidiaries as well as large collaborations with the Groupe Limagrain and sees itself as a vehicle of seed transmutation, wherein the seeds for the future will be developed through a combination of genetics, breeding, natural and artificial variation and transgenics. Recognizing the cyclical nature of agriculture and research, and the fundamental economics of a profitable enterprise, Avesthagen combines in-house research, joint ventures and client-driven research opportunities to develop the seeds of tomorrow and the requisite technology today in a profitable manner. The in-house programs focus on varieties with value-added traits, capable of being cultivated under adverse conditions as well as nutrition-focused projects. In addition, this division provides large food manufacturers and exporters with testing and certification expertise. Exclusive Licensee of GeneticID USA for India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Offers plant marker development through assignment of polymorphisms to phenotypes/traits/genes: microsatellite, SNP, RAPD, AFLP, SCAR, SSLP, CAPS etc. Customized Molecular Services: Plant molecular biology, flanking sequence discovery, vector and construct construction, sequencing, promoter cloning, cDNA and BAC library services. Offers licensing opportunities for HybridFITTM, DroughtFITTM, Lyco-PLUS, NutritionFITTM and SalinityFITTM patented technologies.

## **AVESTHAGEN LIMITED**

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