

# JAPAN ROUNDUP

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Bio-Industry Development Center (BI-DEC) of the Japanese Association of Industrial Fermentation are researching how to promote bio-industry in Kyushu (Southern Japan) and Hokkaido (northern Japan). Groups from both regions should have reports on the subject by March.

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The Research Association for Agrochemical Biotechnology has begun functioning. Its four-company "Bacteria Group" (including Hokko Chemical Industry, Meiji Seika Kaisha, Kumiai Chemical Industry, and Nippon Soda) will develop high yield strains and production technology for insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides. The association's seven-member "Plant Cell Group" (including Mitsui Toatsu Chemicals, Kyowa Hakko Kogyo, Nippon Kayaka, Chugai Pharmaceutical, Nissan Chemical Industries, Nihon Nohyaku, and Shionogi) will emphasize phytohormones and substances to kill viruses, insects, and bacteria.

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Mitsui Sugar Co. has developed a sweetener called palatinose that does not cause tooth decay. The company is building a \$1.2 million plant in Okayama Prefecture that will produce 600 tons a year of palatinose, with a potential for 2,000 tons annually. Mitsui will supply the product to sweet-maker Lotte Co. for use in confections and chewing gum.

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The Japan Committee for Economic Development has called for increased biotech research on agricultural seeds as a way to address the world food crisis. The private, non-profit organization said Japan lags behind the U.S. and European nations in this area because of a lack of incentives. The committee proposed establishing a research center on plant heredity and creating new university departments to carry out basic research.

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The Toyo Rubber Industry Co. is interested in applying immobilized enzyme technology through joint ventures with fermentation and medical manufacturers. The company expects its biotechnology business to be

the mainstay of its chemical department in the future.

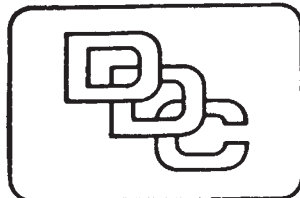
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A Belgian biotechnology trade promotion team recently visited Japan to do the groundwork for a closer connection with Japan's bio-industry. The two countries reached agreements on the export of proteins to Japan and on the transfer of the technology for water absorbing resins to Japan. Belgium also intends to export to Japan new anticancer drugs, diagnostic reagent devices, and enzymes for food production.

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Researchers in Japan have developed a liposome-imbedded heme that carries oxygen much as red blood cells do. Artificial blood has long been a priority in this country because blood for transfusions is in chronically short supply. The new product, developed by a team of researchers led by H. Tsuchida of Waseda University, is able to carry oxygen in water, an important characteristic not shared by fluorine artificial blood.

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