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Drought tolerance gene granted Chinese patent

FuturaGene PLC ("FuturaGene" or "the Group", AIM: FGN), a leader in plant genetic research and development for global forestry, biofuel and agricultural markets, has been granted a patent by the Chinese patent office entitled "Method for increasing stress tolerance in plants". The patent covers FuturaGene's drought tolerance gene for use in both food and non-food crops.

On 3 December 2009, FuturaGene licensed drought tolerance technology to Bayer CropScience for utilisation in cotton worldwide. The licensed technology is covered by this newly issued patent in China.

This Chinese patent is a significant step for the Group as it protects and enhances its business development in China. It follows the announcement on 2 September 2009 that the Group is collaborating with the Chinese Academy of Forestry on the use of the same gene for the development of new enhanced poplar with increased water efficiency.

Water availability is one of the principal environmental limiters of crop yield around the world, hampering cultivation of crops on more than 40% of the earth's land surface and posing a significant threat to global agricultural production and food supply.

Northern China was recently hit by its worst drought in 50 years, affecting half of the winter wheat cropping area and leaving millions of people and livestock unable to access sufficient water. Following this event, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations devised a plan with the Chinese authorities for short and medium term intervention for drought impact mitigation over the next three years.

Dr Stanley Hirsch, FuturaGene CEO said,

"This is a key development for us and consolidates our global intellectual property position in the critical area of drought tolerance, and significantly strengthens our position in China.

"China is the largest global cotton producer, both by volume and by value, and is also a major potential market for drought tolerant poplar, which could play an important role in reversing desertification. This patent provides protection for our commercial efforts in China. In a country with real concerns about food security, it is a major development in the process of establishing sustainable agriculture."

Enquiries:

FuturaGene Plc

Dr. Nissim Chen +972-8-9319550

Notes to Editors



FuturaGene

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About Futuragene PLC - www.futuragene.com

FuturaGene is a leader in plant genetic research and development for the global forestry, biofuel, and agricultural markets. The Group develops sustainable, ecologically sound technology to meet the ever increasing demands for fiber, fuel and food crops in the face of declining and deteriorating land and water resources.

FuturaGene aims to be the leading crop technology company for biomass, second generation biofuel and biopower, through two main technology platforms: Cell Wall Modification, which helps crops grow faster, enhancing yield and processability; and Abiotic Stress Tolerance which enables plants to grow in harsh, dry, salty environments or protects yield when plants are stressed by these factors.

The Group's most advanced technologies are for yield improvement in sustainable industrial forestry and it has strong partnerships with leading international forestry and agriculture companies, such as Suzano, Bayer CropScience, Forage Genetics (Land 'O Lakes), China Academy of Forestry (CAF), AA Alliance and Targeted Growth. The Group has established broad applications of its technology in key crops including eucalyptus, poplar, alfalfa, cotton and corn.

Israel Office: 2 Pekeris St., Park Tamar, PO Box 199, Rehovot 76100 Israel. T+972-8-9319550; F +972-8-9319515 www.futuragene.com