

## **Crop & Food Response to Ministry of Economic Development Bioprospecting Framework**

Crop & Food Research (CFR) attended the Ministry of Economic Development's (MED's) Bioprospecting Stakeholder Reference Group Forum held on 12 September 2007. The company endorses the views expressed at the meeting and considers that a number of important issues were raised and discussed at this meeting.

The intent of CFR's response to MED's Bioprospecting Framework is not to traverse all of the issues discussed at the Bioprospecting Stakeholder Reference Group Forum. Instead we wish to focus our response around five key issues that we consider critical to the further development of the Framework:

### **1. New Zealand's obligations**

New Zealand has guardianship of a small and unique part of the planet's biodiversity, which does have unique and potentially valuable properties. We consider that this uniqueness implies an obligation to contribute internationally. We cannot develop a Framework that denies access to this resource, neither can we allow other countries to take a lead role in discovery from our own biodiversity.

### **2. Economic returns**

It must be recognised that economic returns from bioprospecting only occur after major downstream investment (in many cases from multi-national companies), and then only rarely. Expectations of economic returns from granting access to researchers should not be high. In most cases, the net economic benefit to New Zealand occurs from the significant spill-over benefits from a successful discovery (cultivation or some processing in New Zealand). The Framework should recognise this and attempt to anchor benefits from successful discoveries back to New Zealand while maintaining open access to the resources.

### **3. Scope of Bioprospecting**

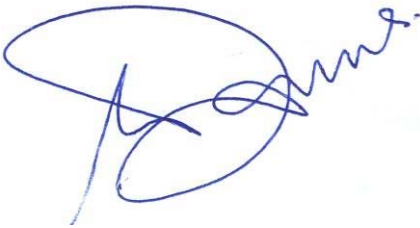
There is a danger that bioprospecting areas other than drug discovery and nutraceutical products are overlooked as part of the Framework. Significant opportunities exist for the use of native plants (as germplasm for breeding) in areas of ornamentals (hebe ornamentals are one of New Zealand's largest biodiversity exports), foods and cosmetics. Some of these areas, while having smaller economic opportunities, are also much lower risk and hence could provide more benefit to New Zealand than drug-type bioprospecting.

**4. Wai 262**

There is a significant level of uncertainty around the potential implications of the Wai 262 claim. This uncertainty is severely inhibiting the development of research projects and private sector involvement in research projects in New Zealand. The Framework needs to address this issue as soon as possible with acknowledgement that the Framework may change following the conclusion of the Wai 262 claim.

**5. Funding for bioprospecting**

Currently, there is very little funding for bioprospecting and biodiscovery projects. We note that the bulk of bioprospecting funding has recently been terminated by FRST. This is an extremely important issue and is linked strongly with our obligations as a country given our unique resources (see above).



Dr Chris Downs  
**General Manager Strategy**