MAJOR EVENTS

International Biotech Project to be Based in Guangzhou Island

It was announced at the Guangzhou Biotechnology Work Conference recently that the municipal government will be developing biotechnology on Guangzhou Island located in the Huizhu district of Guangzhou. In the next two to three years, technical and service systems will be set up on the island. The island, aptly called “International Bio-Island”, will be attracting local and foreign investments. Total investment has been estimated to be RMB1 billion (US$121 million). The Guangzhou Planning and Designing Institute together with a well-known US biochemical engineering design company and designers from Japan’s Tokyo University have already worked out the plan for the project.

The project will be run using private investments without any direct investment from the government. This approach is novel because high-tech development projects in China have always been carried out using investment by the government. Enterprises that receive contracts from the government will be allowed to oversee the financing, investment, development and part of the management of this biotechnology project. The government will only provide support in planning, policies and some aspects of the infrastructure development. Project regulation and supervision will also be undertaken by the government.

RESEARCH NEWS

BAU Increases India’s Rice Productivity

India’s Birsa Agricultural University (BAU) has recently released new and improved rice varieties. The rice strains BAU 171-19, BAU-137-4-1, BAU 187-90 and BAU 320-95 have up to 40 percent higher yield potential than existing varieties such as brown gora. These varieties are not only of high quality, they also mature earlier (by an average of about ten days).

With the proper agronomy, these new varieties when adopted will change the rice cultivation scenario in the uplands and may also help in pushing the double cropping systems in larger areas. From quality, yield and early maturity point of view, BAU’s varieties are unparalleled and have high export potential.

The basmati variety, BAU 320-95, is especially successful in field trials. This hybrid possesses the high-yielding and disease-resistant characteristic of IR-36 and the aromatic character of BR-9. According to a BAU report, the yield of BAU 320-95 is much greater than that of ruling national basmati varieties like Pusa Basmati developed by the Indian Agricultural Institute, New Delhi and Taroi Basmati developed by Harana Agricultural University.

In 1998–1999, the total national food grains production was 200 million tons, in which the share of rice was 42 percent. Rice production earned the country almost Rs.500 crores (US$114.9 million) in foreign exchange. This figure is expected to increase by manifolds with the release, adoption and promotion of varieties like BAU 320-95. Presently, BAU’s rice varieties are in demand by Bihar State Seed Corporation, Bihar’s State Department of Agriculture, and states like West Bengal and Assam for multiplication as foundation and certified seeds.