

John Innes Centre

Mr Jonathan Matthews
26 Pottergate
NR2 1DX

Friday, 13 February 2009

Dear Mr Matthews

'Sense About Science conceals vested interests of pro-GM scientists'

We wish to point out that, contrary to what is implied by the GMWatch press release of 9th February (and in further detail in the 'CORPORATE AFFILIATIONS AND VESTED INTERESTS SECTION' on the Media Lens Message Board) the Director of the John Innes Centre has no shareholdings in any biotechnology company or other commercial organisation related to the work of JIC, and hence cannot as implied receive research funding from such an organisation.

You mention a 'private biotech company' in the GMWatch press release. In 1998 while a Research Professor at The Salk Institute, Professor Lamb helped restructure a small Californian corporation, Global Aggro, to become in effect a biotechnology start-up. Global Aggro then merged with another start-up to form Akkadix in 1999. He was a shareholder in Global Aggro and thence Akkadix and when he moved from the Salk Institute via a short sojourn in Edinburgh to become director of the John Innes Centre in October 1999 his shareholding was declared and mechanisms for scrutiny put in place by the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council and JIC. Akkadix ceased trading in 2000/1. Akkadix has never funded work at JIC.

Syngenta (the crop protection and seeds company) do not have a dedicated laboratory on campus - this closed seven years ago.

We are actively encouraged by BBSRC and ultimately by HM Treasury, to seek economic impact for UK taxpayer-funded breakthroughs. We also regard the uptake of plant science research for 'public good' as important, for example in reducing environmental impacts. We do not regard our affiliations to industry (whether biotech or any other) as a contentious issue. Our interests are not 'vested' and our scientists are extremely careful to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. Our authors declare funding when publishing scientific papers. Staff, and members of the Governing Council are required to disclose Directorships etc, and we have very strict rules even on acceptance of hospitality and gifts over the value of £25.

On occasion the JIC receives small amounts of funding from the Gatsby Foundation. The Sainsbury Laboratory (which is co-located with JIC but independent of it) receives core, peer-reviewed funding from the Gatsby Foundation. The aims of the Gatsby Foundation are to develop basic research in fundamental processes of plant growth and

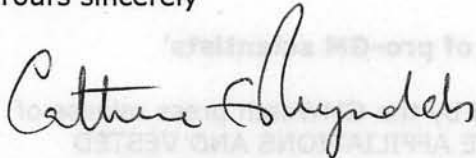
development and molecular plant pathology, to encourage young researchers in this field in the UK and to support improved introduction to the world of plants within post 16 science teaching.

The John Innes Centre does not have 'multi-million pound funding deals with the major biotech corporations'. The majority of our funding is from the public purse, much of it granted on a competitive, peer-reviewed basis. Much of our industry funding is in the form of pre-competitive industry:government grants designed to facilitate the uptake of new science by industry. We do have 1:1 relationships with companies, and the BBSRC regard this as an essential component of our portfolio.

JIC is among the funders of Sense about Science. The amounts involved are minimal (we co-sponsor a lecture). The John Innes Foundation is also a sponsor of Sense about Science (there is no such thing as the John Innes Trust). It is worth noting that JIF is entirely independent of JIC.

With this information in mind, the JIC would be grateful if GMWatch could update and correct its' press releases and other media materials.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Reynolds
Head of Communications
John Innes Centre

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