Private support helps public plant research

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The private sector and an Austrian research institute are chipping in to help support one of the most widely used public biological databases in the world. Although the majority of funding continues to come from the National Science Foundation, The Arabidopsis Information Resource (TAIR) database is now receiving support from other organizations as well. Almost 40,000 researchers worldwide use it monthly to study everything from crop engineering and alternative energy sources to human disease. Although *Arabidopsis thaliana* is an experimental plant, it shares many of its genes and basic biological processes with other species of plants and animals including humans.

Two corporations have recently signed on as TAIR sponsors: Dow AgroSciences and most recently Syngenta Biotechnology Inc.

"Dow AgroSciences is very pleased to support the important work of TAIR. The resources provided by TAIR create an essential link for both the public and private research community that is instrumental to solving some of our industry's greatest challenges," remarked D. Ry Wagner, Global New Ventures and Technology Leader for Dow AgroSciences.

"As a leader in plant biotechnology research, Syngenta continues to benefit from the Arabidopsis Information database," said Roger Kemble, head of Crop Genetics Research at Syngenta Biotechnology. "We want to help ensure this valuable resource will be there in the future."

In addition to the two corporations, the Gregor Mendel Institute (GMI), a public research institute affiliated with the Austrian Academy of

Sciences, has also recently contributed to the support of TAIR. "We use TAIR on a daily basis, our databases connect to it, and we consider it an essential resource for plant biology research," commented Dr. Magnus Nordborg, GMI's scientific director.

TAIR's efforts to provide high quality data to researchers are centered on extraction of experimental gene function data from published research articles and improving the accuracy and completeness of the Arabidopsis genome annotation. The freely available TAIR website provides access to data on genes, clones, markers, mutant genes, proteins, publication protocols, DNA and seed stock information and more, and receives over 20 million page views annually from around the world.

"These contributions will have a significant impact on our ability to maintain the high quality datasets researchers depend on," remarked Eva Huala, principal investigator and director of TAIR at Carnegie's Department of Plant Biology. "Diversifying our sources of funding will make it easier to sustain TAIR over the long term. We're very pleased that there is interest in corporate sponsorship from the private sector and we hope to see more in the coming months."

TAIR is produced by the Carnegie Institution's Department of Plant Biology in Stanford, California. TAIR collaborates with the Arabidopsis Biological Resource Center (ABRC) to allow researchers to search and order stocks.

Provided by Carnegie Institution