

## **Ben-Gurion U. and PTT Chemical sign R & D agreement to commercialize green algae strain**

EurekaAlert

BEER-SHEVA, ISRAEL, January, 28, 2011 -- Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) and the PTT Chemical Public Company Ltd. (PTT) in Thailand have signed a research and development collaboration agreement for commercial development of BGU's proprietary green algae strain.

The agreement is for the production of dihomo gamma-linolenic acid (DGLA- Omega 6) using BGU's mutant strain of the green microalgae *Parietochloris incise*. The joint research will focus on optimizing DGLA production through advanced algae cultivation methods and large-scale processing in a commercially viable setting.

The parties regard this cooperation as a first step in a long lasting collaboration toward developing additional valuable bio-chemicals from microalgae, as well as using these microorganisms as potential feed stocks for biofuels. The BGU strain accumulates up to 12 to 15 percent (of dry wt.) DGLA in cytoplasmic oil bodies and to date is the only plant source capable of producing appreciable DGLA quantities. Its ability to deposit DGLA in triacylglycerols makes the organism a promising source for pharmaceutical purposes.

DGLA is a precursor for the anti-inflammatory prostaglandin E1 and its use could aid in the treatment of chronic inflammations, such as atopic eczema, psoriasis, asthma and arthritis, as well as in reduction of blood pressure, cholesterol levels and the risk for heart attacks. DGLA's market potential is estimated at \$300 million by 2015.

According to Prof. Sammy Boussiba, director of the Landau Family Microalgal Biotechnology Laboratory (MBL) at BGU's Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, "We believe that this joint project will lead to the development of the first pilot plant for the commercial production of DGLA. We are proud that PTT Chemical has recognized the capability of our team, an outstanding group of academics who have proven their ability to compete in the international marketplace and joined our commitment to the highest level of research."

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