



PRESS RELEASE

Craig Venter creates synthetic life form

Brussels

27 May 2010

Ref. : *ESA_10.0483*

ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. It represents 32 national seed associations (and with that more than 1000 seed businesses in the EU, most of them SMEs) and 41 direct company members.

ESA's mission is to work for fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry, freedom of choice for customers in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods and for effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seed.

Contact:

ESA

European Seed Association

Tel. 0032-2-7432860

secretariat@euroseeds.org

www.euroseeds.org

Scientists have created the world's first synthetic life form in a landmark experiment that paves the way for designer organisms that are built rather than evolved.

The controversial feat, which has occupied 20 scientists for more than 10 years at an estimated cost of \$40m, was described by one researcher as "a defining moment in biology".

Craig Venter, the pioneering US geneticist behind the experiment, said the achievement heralds the dawn of a new era in which new life is made to benefit humanity, starting with bacteria that churn out biofuels, soak up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and even manufacture vaccines.

The new organism is based on an existing bacterium that causes mastitis in goats, but at its core is an entirely synthetic genome that was constructed from chemicals in the laboratory.

The team now plans to use the synthetic organism to work out the minimum number of genes needed for life to exist. From this, new microorganisms could be made by bolting on additional genes to produce useful chemicals, break down pollutants, or produce proteins for use in vaccines.

This is "a defining moment in the history of biology and biotechnology", Mark Bedau, a philosopher at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, told Science.

If you want to read the whole article, please click onto the link below:

www.guardian.co.uk/science/2010/may/20/craig-venter-synthetic-life-form