

ASIA PACIFIC BIOTECH NEWS



August 2011 Vol. 15 • No. 8

A monthly international biotechnology publication

www.asiabiotech.com

Personalized Medicine



**The Role of Biomarker in Personalized Medicine:
Concept, Technology and Challenges**

Personalized Medicine in Cancer

**Trends, Challenges and Opportunities of Biomarkers
in Translational Medicine**

**Brain Injury Biomarkers and their Utilities in
Personalized Medicine**

KH BIOTECH SERVICES
A Subsidiary of World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd.

KH Biotech Services is an imprint of World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd. MICA (P) 037/04/2011. © KH Biotech Services

Feeding Asia in the 21st Century: Building Urban-Rural Alliances at International Conference on Asian Food Security (ICAFS) 2011 in Singapore

From 10 to 12 August 2011, over 200 food security experts from around the world converged in Singapore to discuss the challenge of 'Feeding Asia in the 21st Century' at the inaugural International Conference on Asian Food Security (ICAFS). It is estimated that 63 per cent of the world's 1 billion undernourished people reside in Asia, and population growth and rapid urbanisation will only contribute to the region's food security challenges in decades to come.

Jointly organised by the Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and the Philippines-based South East Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), ICAFS brought together researchers, government representatives, development partners, investors, large-scale agricultural producers and farmers groups for three days of stimulating and rigorous dialogue.

In a move of progress and solidarity, participants produced a draft ICAFS statement on how to best address Asia's food security challenges at the conclusion of the Conference. Key recommendations included pursuing public-private partnerships to ensure food availability alongside profitability of food producing industries, addressing the urgent food insecurity plight of Asia's most vulnerable populations by improving social safety nets and food distribution, taking pragmatic and concrete efforts to link policies in the food and health sectors, and extending existing foundations to create

positive symbiotic relationships between food producers and food consumers.

Other suggestions included undertaking sustainable food production strategies and recognising and responding to shifts in food distribution and marketing that define the private food sector in Asia. These recommendations were conceptualised during the conference's plenary session, which invited the input, questions and challenges of the over 200 international participants in attendance. Dean of RSIS, Ambassador Barry Desker commended the conference's pioneering efforts of conceiving ways to sustainably and equitably feed and nourish a larger, more urban, and increasingly affluent Asian population. He noted that it was no time to cower in the face of critical challenges such as spiralling food prices, changing agricultural practices, natural resource and environmental concerns such as climate change and shortages of water and arable land, and the growing number of undernourished in the region. "We must continue to tap into promising new agricultural technologies, infrastructural development, more mature food distribution and storage systems, regulatory market mechanisms and cooperative regional policies which hold the key to minimising future food crises," said Amb Desker.

A further highlight of the Conference was keynote speaker Senior Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministries of Defence and National Development of Singapore, Dr Mohamad Maliki bin Osman's announcement that Singapore would be taking a more proactive role in ensuring regional food

security through a USD 8.2 million investment over five years by the National Research Foundation (NRF), which will go towards a new research partnership to improve rice cultivation.

The project will involve the National University of Singapore, the Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory and the International Rice Research Institute. It aims to develop better rice farming methods and to explore how to improve yield and disease resistance in the face of rising food demand and the challenges of climate change and natural resource concerns. This project marks Singapore's participation in the Global Rice Science Partnership (GRISP), a partnership of about 900 organisations worldwide committed to research and development (R&D) related to rice.

In support, Professor Paul Teng said that this renewed commitment to regional food security was a step forward in the country amplifying its involvement in the sources of its food supply.

"Singapore, as a typical urban city-state, currently imports 90 per cent of all its food, which makes it particularly vulnerable to food price fluctuations and disruptions in food supply chains," added Teng, who is senior fellow and food security programme advisor at the RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security (NTS) Studies and dean of graduate programmes and research at the National Institute of Education (NIE). "Therefore, Singapore's critical food challenge is to ensure supply resistance at national level, which cannot be achieved without strong linkages to regional and global food security networks."