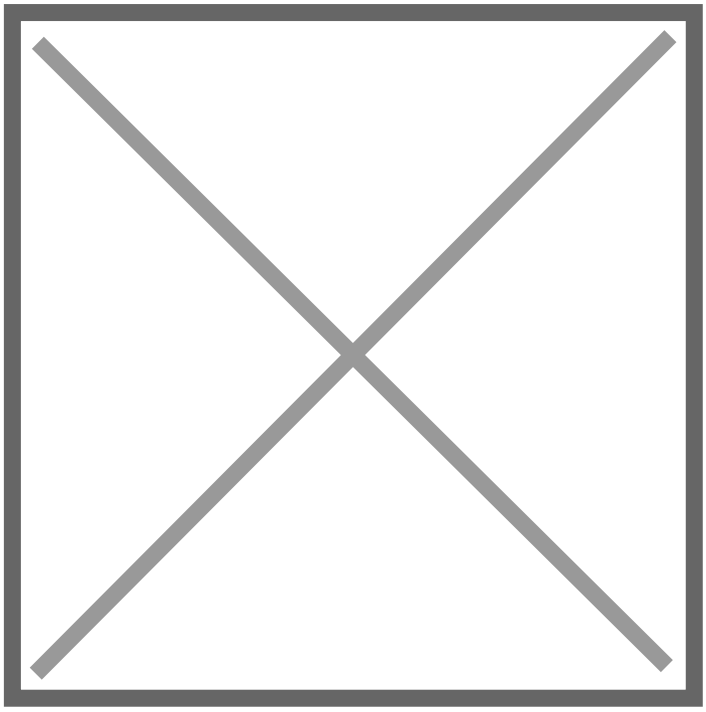
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Indian biotech: $100 billion gorilla in 2025

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A government-industry joint report has predicted that India's emerging biotechnology sector will become a $100 billion giant from its current $4 billion level in the year 2025

AbleÃ¢â?¬Å?A dynamic and vibrant biotechnology industry would be one of the main engines of innovation in India and will establish the country as a global destination for innovation with economic spillover effects such as creation of a large biotechnology manufacturing industry, high technology skilled jobs and supporting an ancillary industry that feeds the innovation engine,Ã¢â?¬? summed up the report commissioned by Indian government's federal Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and prepared by the Association of Biotechnology-Led Enterprises (ABLE).

The 2025 industry revenue number has been extrapolated from the 2012 BioSpectrum-ABLE Biotech Industry Survey which revealed that the sector had a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 24 percent since 2003. With some more support from the government, with more favorable policies, the industry could grow at a CAGR of 30 percent or more in the next decade. This will nudge it past the $100 billion mark by 2025, predicts the report.

Ã¢â?¬Å?The potential for India to be a global innovation hub especially in biotechnology exists. The Indian biotech industry has also shown that when proper support systems exist they can deliver scaled up innovative products that are affordable and are of high quality,Ã¢â?¬? says Dr Satya Dash, who authored the report, Ã¢â?¬Å?Indian Biotechnology: The Roadmap to the Next Decade and BeyondÃ¢â?¬? early this year as the chief operating officer of ABLE.

Added Dr M K Bhan, secretary, DBT, Ã¢â?¬Å?The government has established several innovative industry focused schemes such as SBIRI, BIPP and Ignition Grant. These programs are helping the industry to proactively incorporate innovation as the driving force for R&D, enabling the industry to build capacity for future growth and are creating platforms for positive collaborations between industry and academia for translational biology.Ã¢â?¬?

Of course, this is not going to happen if the business as usual scenario continues. An institutional and structural framework has to be built to help the country achieve its potential as a break out nation for biotechnology innovation.

According to the report, the five guiding principles the government should follow to make this happen are:

1. Create a strong, streamlined and regulatory foundation that fosters innovation.
2. Reshape and build government infrastructure to build capacity for research and development and facilitate translation and commercialization potential.
3. Facilitate technology access as well as market access for innovative products to achieve scale through public procurement.
4. Promote biotech entrepreneurship and provide a channel to access risk capital for all stages of biotechnology product lifecycle.
5. Nucleate and foster networks and triple helix collaborations.

One of the key suggestions is to set up a Ã¢â?¬Å?Centre for Biotechnology Policy and Regulatory SciencesÃ¢â?¬? on the lines of the Institute for Manufacturing in University of Cambridge, UK which brings together all the elements of regulation, policies, industry-government interactions, academia-industry interactions and business strategy. The report has also called for setting up fully-equipped technology-transfer offices in all science and technology research centers.

The government has declared this to be the Decade of Innovation. Ã¢â?¬Å? Biotechnology is synonymous with innovation,Ã¢â?¬? commented Dr Vijay Chandru, who headed ABLE from 2009 to 2012 and Dr P M Murali, current President of ABLE in their foreword in the report. Ã¢â?¬Å?The innovation imperatives are clear enough-biosimilars and diagnostics for affordable healthcare, integrated traditional medicine, green biotech for less dependence on petroleum, bioremediation for environmental recovery, agricultural productivity and value addition, leapfrogging with genomics, synthetic biology and biomedical informatics.Ã¢â?¬?

In the past, India's biotech industry has come into its own and laid the foundations for the future. It is time now to build on these foundations and embrace the future with a strong commitment focused on innovation.

Narayanan Suresh