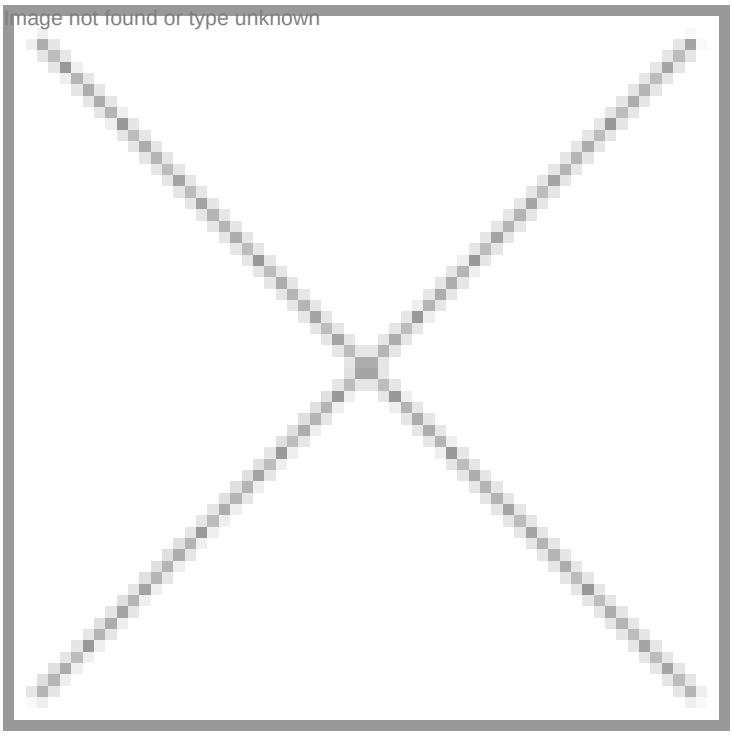
BioSpectrum the business of Bio & Health Sciences

'We aim to provide integrated biosolutions'

13 February 2012 | News

Image not found or type unknown



Mrpeterbainsfermentabi

Mr Peter Bains
non-executive chairman,
Fermenta Biotech

Fermenta Biotech (FBL) has had many laurels to its credit since it was incorporated as a 100 percent subsidiary of DIL group of companies in 1986. It is a pioneer of Penicillin G Amidase enzyme in India and has emerged as a leader in enzyme technologies for betalactams. It also makes cost-effective and efficient enzymes for application in betalactam production.

Fermenta is a premier vitamin D supplier and vitamin D3 manufacturer, a business it took over in 2004 from DIL that was manufacturing vitamin D3 since 1974. The company made news in 2011 when Evolvence India invested 40 crore in the company. Mr Peter Bains, the non-executive chairman of Fermenta Biotech, throws light on the company's game plan for India and the significant investments in its facilities. Also a board member of Syngene International, Mr Bains shares his optimism regarding the biotech enzyme market in India in the coming months.

Image not found or type unknown

Tell us about the milestones FBL has reached in biotech sector and other divisions over the past one year?

Mr Bains: Fermenta Biotech has been making good progress across all its business platforms. In its biotech division, the company has been developing a novel, patented and eco-friendly enzymatic technology for the production of antibiotics such as Amoxicillin. This process has been successfully scaled up and the new enzyme, Fermase, is now commercially available. In addition, Fermenta has invested in research on novel enzymes that can play a role in environment-friendly manufacturing processes. In its vitamin D3 division, strong sales and positive outlook have helped the company complete the construction and commissioning of a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Dahej, Gujarat, which will provide capacity for future growth and allow product development.

In its environment division, the company has tied up with two leading European companies to provide sustainable bio-solutions to address a range of environmental pollution challenges related to waste water management, oil remediation, lake remediation and sewage treatment. We are now beginning to pilot some of these products and services in India. In its specialty API division, record sales for vitamin D3 product group were achieved. Sales were generated from 38 countries as against 30 last year. Feed grade formulation was introduced in the European and American markets and was well received.

Can you elaborate on the developments at FBL in terms of infrastructure and manpower?

Mr Bains: Over the years, the company has invested over 25 crore in infrastructure, which includes modern manufacturing facilities and a well-equipped modern biotech R&D facility. The company has also accelerated its investment in R&D to bring in various pipeline products. It has a team of over 45 people for its biotech business.

Fermenta is planning to set up a new fermentation facility in the special economic zone of Dahej in Gujarat. At the R&D level, the company is planning to invest on new equipment and new talent enabling the development of new technology platforms.

How do you see the biotech enzyme market in India in the next one year?

Mr Bains: The worldwide demand for enzymes is expected to touch $4.4 billion by 2015 (at a compounded annual growth rate of six percent). Based on information from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, the bioindustrial (enzyme) market in India clocked $142.3 million in 2010-11, growing at a rate of 10.9 percent, as against $128.2 million in 2009-10. Based on the global trend and the prevailing Indian scenario, we expect a good growth.

What is the business strategy of FBL in India ?

Mr Bains: Fermenta Biotech aims to be among the leading specialized global technology providers in biospace by focusing on innovative, proprietary and eco-friendly technologies. In pharmaceutical and fine chemical industry, the focus is to replace the prevalent hazardous chemical manufacturing practices into eco-friendly and green processes. In environmental bio-solutions space, the focus is on sustainable bio-solutions for environmental problems.

Tell us about the biotech product line of the company?

Mr Bains: Our main products are Fermase PS 150, a novel enzyme product for enzymatic Amoxicillin, and Fermase PA 850, an improved enzyme for beta lactam and cephalosporin intermediates. Both versions of these products have been pilot-tested and we have initiated the commercial sales.

In pharmaceutical and fine chemical space, the company aims to provide integrated bio-solutions. For example, thecompany is working on proprietary enzyme for cephalosporin synthesis as well as enzyme for fine chemicals. In environmental sector, the company is working on new technology platforms for efficient bio-remediation of waste.

What have been the challenges faced by the company in the biotech space in India?

Mr Bains: For any technology, there is an initial barrier of acceptance, especially when the new technology is focused on replacing age-old and well-established practices. However, with the consistent efforts and technological supremacy, Fermenta has been able to make progress.

Nayantara Som in Mumbai