

"Roche steps up APAC focus"

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~~Dr Manfred Baier, CEO, Roche Diagnostics~~

Roche Diagnostics, the worldwide No. 1 supplier to diagnostics manufacturers in clinical chemistry, immunology, and molecular diagnostics, has its industrial business organized under Roche Applied Science (RAS). This division has been supplying the diagnostics industry, the life science research industry, and the pharma/ biotech Industry with high quality biochemicals from the last 20 years.

Dr Manfred Baier, CEO, Roche Diagnostics, in an interview with BioSpectrum talks about the company's increased focus in the Asia Pacific region.

He elaborates on why the company has increased its headcount in APAC by a factor of five, and is currently involved in setting up of dedicated key account managers in the APAC region. Some excerpts:

How is the Asia Pacific market shaping up for Roche's products aimed at the research sector and the raw material supplies?

For more than 20 years now, the "industrial business" of Roche Applied Science supplies the diagnostics industry, the life science research industry, and the pharma/ biotech industry with high quality bioreagents. Today, APAC is the most emerging market we are working on. Our industrial business grew by more than 20 percent per annum over the last two

years, so did research business. In the industrial business one reason for success is that more and more APAC companies are becoming global players or aiming to become one. They are our key customers, because they have to fulfill the highest quality standards and therefore rely on high quality raw materials and customized solutions. Other important customers are Western companies producing in APAC; their number is dynamically growing.

Which countries in the Asia Pacific region are emerging as big players in the research areas of pharma and biotech and pure and applied research, which are capable of absorbing Roche products?

Most importantly, China and India. A couple of other countries are following.

Has the amalgamation process of 454 Life Sciences and NimbleGen been completed? How has this enhanced Roche portfolio of supplier products in the genomics area?

The integration of these new members of Roche has been completed last year. In genomics, we are now able to offer complete workflow solutions for all application fields.

Genomics, proteomics and now nanotech and nanobiotech are some areas that may see more research investments in the Asian region. What share of this pie Roche is eyeing now?

We already have a very good position in genomics and proteomics and should be able to enlarge it further.

What are your plans to enhance the presence of Roche in supplying key raw materials to the industry with regional presence?

As part of Hoffmann La Roche we know the demands of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics production. This knowledge made us the worldwide No. 1 supplier to diagnostics manufacturers in clinical chemistry, immunology, and molecular diagnostics. Our customers receive the same ingredients that Roche use in our own pharma and diagnostics production. Strictest confidentiality by a dedicated information system is guaranteed. Besides our established product line we offer custom manufacturing and contract production. During the last few years, we have increased our headcount in APAC by factor five, and we are still growing. Currently, we are setting up a team of key account manager for the industrial business in the APAC region. Our investments fulfil our expectations, in the last two years, we experienced tremendous growth rates.

Our Penzberg facility near Munich in Germany is one of the world's largest bioengineering and production sites for biochemicals, diagnostics, and pharmaceuticals. Here is where we produce for our own in-house purposes as well as for our commercially operating customers. The multi-purpose plant incorporates state-of-the-art technologies for genetic engineering, fermentation, and downstream processing-a large number and variety of industrial production processes involve over 200 different microorganisms. The facility is licensed to handle recombinant microorganisms that may require a safety stage one license. Where required, products are manufactured to GMP and GLP standards and can satisfy FDA, USDA, and BGA requirements, and the facility is ISO 9001 certified.

How soon can one get to see the availability of personalized medicines in Asian countries? How will this translate into a big opportunity for Roche?

Personalized medicine will come, and it will come worldwide. The reasons are obvious-treatment has to become more effective, side effects should be minimized, treatment costs have to go down. Roche is the leader in personalized medicine because we have both pharma and diagnostics and know about how to take benefits out of this.

Is affordability a key factor for start-up companies and new research-based companies who are in the start-up and early stage of product development? If so, how is Roche preparing to reap the benefits of this growth market with long term potential?

Research-based start-ups in APAC face the same global competition as start-ups in other parts of the world and need the same high value skills and tools. To participate in the global research market, the RAS research business has to be always at the edge of technology and provide the most efficient technology to the customers.

Are there any issues related to infringement of patents in the industrial and raw material category of products, in the Asian markets?

As far as Roche Applied Science is concerned, there are no ongoing issues.

Do you visualize the emergence of some of the Asian countries as the new hubs of research in life sciences?

Certainly, there is a strong correlation between our research business development in certain APAC countries and development of life science research in these countries. We are strengthening our technology scouting activities in Asia and expect an increasing number of cooperation partners here in future.

Do you have any plans to enhance your product and service offering in the region? If so, which are the new products and which markets are you looking at?

We will introduce new research products regularly. Regarding the industrial business, we will continue to talk to potential customers, to provide them with high quality reagents according to their specific needs, and to build up long-term relationships.

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