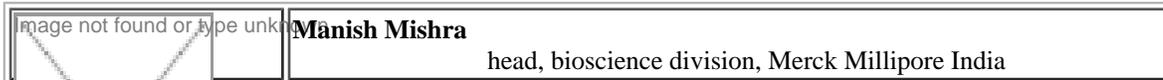


'One of the much awaited launches in the coming days is Aminis platform'

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Since the global merger of the two entities in 2010, Merck Millipore has been working towards integrating its businesses to aid the Indian consumer. With one of the largest sales forces in India, Merck Millipore India has slated 2011-12 as the year of restructuring and hopes to absorb all its existing resources, aiming for a double-digit growth. In an interview with *BioSpectrum*, Manish Mishra, head, bioscience division, Merck Millipore India, talks about what the merger means for its customers, their strengths, a slew of customer centric initiatives and his plans to tackle factors such as the depreciating rupee.

Q How has the merger of Merck and Millipore resulted in you offering integrated solutions to Bioscience customers?

Mishra: Merck is the world leader in chemicals and life science reagents catering to proteomics and genomics research. With Millipore, we have added innovative and high-end research instrument in cellular analysis and multiplexing, filtration and cell culture solutions to our portfolio. We have now expanded our product portfolio, widened our market presence and customer base under single brand, thereby providing "complete workflow solutions."

What is your strength in the bioscience industry?

Our core values lie in innovation. This comes from our state-of-the-art research instruments in cellular analysis and multiplexing reagents. Our research tools, life science reagents and small molecules are of the best quality. Efficient field force with pan-India coverage and excellent service shapes a strong market environment for us. We believe in organic growth and develop our team through continuous training programs of our innovative and expansive product range.

How would you describe your current operations in India?

We have the largest field force in India in bioscience and a structured distribution network. This, in addition to our expansive portfolio, leverages us to have a wide customer base with deepest penetration. We ride on success stories coming not only from Tier I cities, but also from Tier II and III towns.

Our R&D facilities are present worldwide. We are much focused on the development of in-house products and made sizeable investments at our R&D facility in Bangalore. A strong information exchange between the field force and R&D team keeps us ahead in terms of innovation and launch of new products in accordance to market trends. We are also in the process of establishing a centralized and state-of-art warehouse in Bangalore.

How do you place yourself in the bioprocess market?

We are market leaders and trend setters in filtration and sample preparation business in both academic and industrial segments worldwide. Flow cytometry is a growing business in India. Acquisition of Guava was instrumental to complete our product portfolio gap in cell analysis and research areas. We partnered with Luminex Corporation to extend our offering in the multiplexing instrumentation. Our portfolio in antibodies and life science reagents is also very extensive.

How do you view the current competition in the supplier industry?

India gives us a huge opportunity for growth. Market dynamics are complex; price, delivery time and quality sensitivity are high. Customers look out for value-added services and additional features. More global players are entering Indian research and industry sphere through strategic joint ventures and acquisitions that leads to price war and multiple quality product offerings.

Do you feel the need for a stronger industry lobby for issues such as import policy and so on?

Definitely yes. Due to exorbitant custom Duties and clearance charges, we end up paying high landing prices. This makes us lose the advantage against low-cost offerings. Market-friendly government policies on customs will definitely groom healthy competition in quality products, with the price advantage being passed on to the end-users.

What are the new products launched in this year?

This year we have launched Muse Cell Analyzer, a miniaturized table top version of Guava flow cytometer, a fourier transform-infrared (FT-IR) based protein quantification system "Direct Detect" targeting proteomics labs, and Strat-M which is a unique product launched that mimics human skin and targets the cosmetic industries, skin bank and research institutes. There are continuous launches in the multiplexing and molecular biology applications. One of the much awaited launches in the coming days is Aminis platform. This couples the power of flow cytometry with microscopy.

What are the challenges that you currently face?

I feel that challenges are always a window for development. We have worked through various issues that emerged during the past. We are affected by rupee depreciation. We try to tackle the situation by bulk importing fast moving items and keep a check on logistics cost with micro details. We face issues at rate contracts as we don't have a say in the discounts over it.

Manasi Vaidya