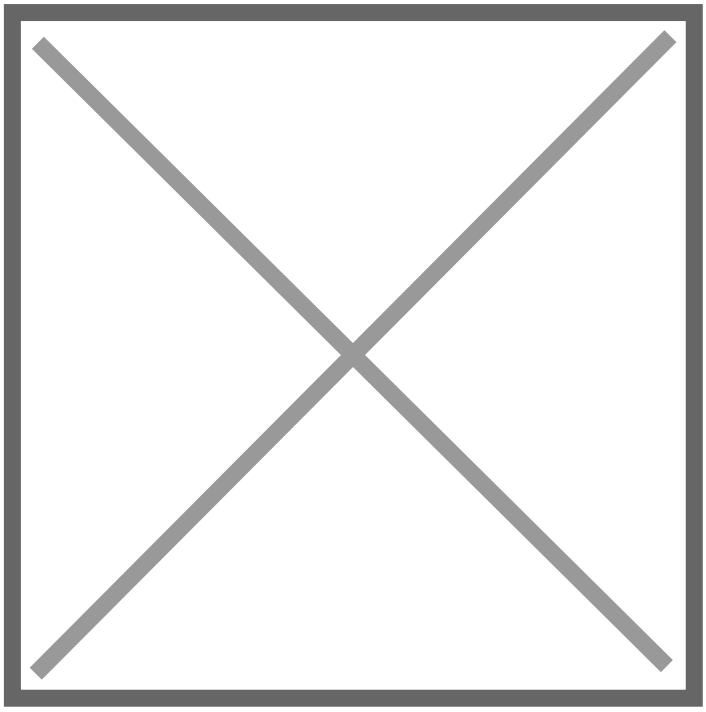
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Fermentors business picking up

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Fermentors have applications in different sectors and the business is growing at the rate of over 20 percent.

Fermentors are the places where proteins for biotechnology are made during upstream processing. In addition to biotechnology, they are used in other sectors such as pharmaceuticals and agriculture. Key players in the fermentors business today include Alfa Laval, Sartorius, Scigenics India, Chemito Technologies, New Labs and Bioengineering. These are supplying fermentors to different sectors such as pharmaceuticals, industrial enzymes and agriculture and also to the educational and research institutes.

Besides the leading ones, there are other small companies in the unorganized space. Amar Equipments is into manufacturing and exporting laboratory fermentors.

Chemito Technologies has been offering bioreactors /fermentors to many companies and institutes. These are low-cost and industrial lab-scale fermentors.

Chennai-based Scigenics India deals with the designing and manufacturing of fermentors and related equipments for life sciences and biotech sectors. It is one of the key players in the manufacture of state-of-the-art bioreactors/ fermentors to meet the stringent demands of the biotechnology-based industries and research institutes.

Sartorius is a leading name in the fermentor business in India. The BIOSTATer is a compact autoclavable laboratory fermentor/ bioreactor system from Sartorius. It is an industrial strength system, with the same components and operation philosophy used to power research at leading biotech and pharmaceutical companies worldwide.

In pilot scale systems Sartorius has few products namely Biostat C-Duck (10 - 30 L), Biostat D50/D100 (50 Ã¢â?¬â?? 100 L), Biostat D 300/D500 (300 - 500 L). besides pilot scale systems it has customized systems such as Quadruple Bench-top Setup, Customized Quad Fermentor, Enzyme production plant, Vaccine production plant and Hormone production plant.

Alfa Laval is another leading name, which is supplying fermentors. New Brunswick is supplying its range of fermentors through New Labs. Bioengineering, Navin Process Systems, Sneha Engineering Equipment are few other players who are supplying fermentors to companies like Ranbaxy, Cadila Pharma, Cadila Healthcare, Lupin, Wockhardt, Shantha Biotechnics, Bharat Biotech, Biological E, Panacea Biotec, Biocon, Shoshone Chemicals.

Alfa Laval has been focusing on projects while Sartorius and Scigenics are focusing on the individual products with their range of products on offer. The local small players are focusing on R&D institutions.

"At present all non-API companies are using fermentors. Vaccine manufacturers, pharma food industries, R&D institutes such as TERI, NCL, and CFTRI etc are using fermentors. TERI has one lakh capacity fermentor, Biocon has three-lakh capacity fermentor while companies like Dr Reddy's Labs too have been using fermentors for their R&D activities," said Rajesh Behl, manager, business development, Chemito Technologies Pvt Ltd.

S Muthuswamy, director, Scigenics India said, "The companies are selling the fermentors to many industries such as industrial enzymes, pharmaceutical, vaccines manufacturers, agriculture mainly to bio pesticide and bio fertilizer companies. But in the agri sector the market is not in organized form." Commenting on the size of the market, Muthuswamy said, "It is difficult to say the exact size of fermentors business in the country. Last year alone Hyderabad-based companies have purchased fermentors worth Rs 30-40 crore. It is growing at rate of 20 percent."

Considering the application in various industries, Rajesh Behl of Chemito Technologies said, "The fermentors business in India will be about Rs 500 crore." Sharing similiar views, S Roy Choudhari, senior store and purchase officer at National Center for Cell Sciences, Pune, said, "There is huge potential for bioreactors/ fermentors in India. Fermentors are used in various R&D institutes including agriculture besides pharmaceutical and biotechnology."

Narayan Kulkarni