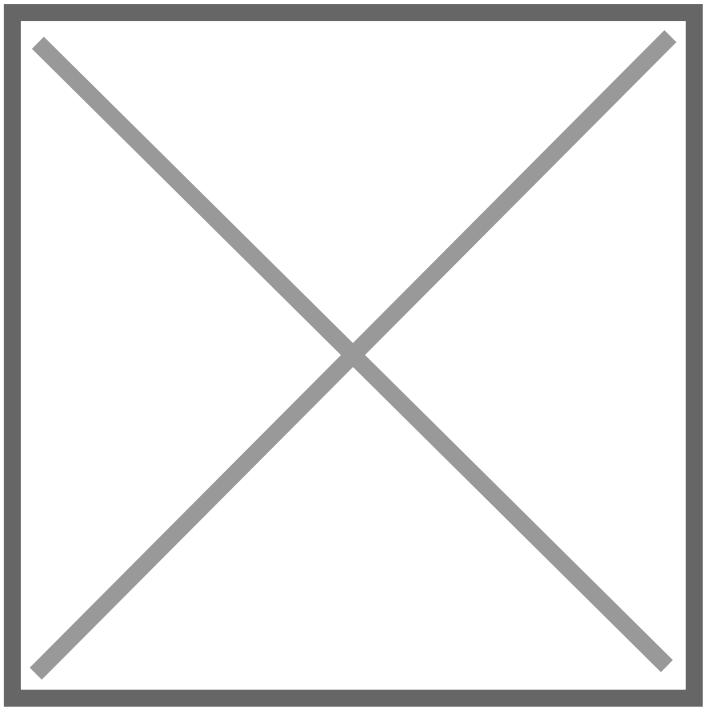
BioSpect
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

BioAgri draws domain specialists

12 May 2004 | News



The thrust on the bioagri segment has led to the establishment of new companies. Many traditional seed companies have also branched out into agricultural biotechnology. This industry has requirements in the areas of research, technical support and marketing and most of the companies are both into product development and marketing.

Employer Expectations

Qualifications Required

Research and Development Postgraduate, doctorate, post doctorate degree with specialization in plant molecular biology, biotechnology, tissue culture, plant breeding, seed technology, genetics, genomics, proteomics.

Marketing

MBA, MSc Agri, graduate/postgraduate degree with relevant experience in sales and marketing

Selection Procedure

- Inviting resumes
- Screening
- Short-listing and then interviews
- Campus recruitment done

Selection Edge

- Thorough domain knowledge
- Analytical and practical skills to plan experiments and execute them
- Hands on relevant experience
- Innovative ideas
- Good communication skills

Training

- Specialized in-house training programs for employees
- Training programs/workshops conducted for students

Â

"As agriculture is a dominant sector in India, we see a huge opportunity. The surge in opportunity will be in improving agricultural productivity," said Dr Villoo Morawala-Patell, founder and CEO, Avestha Gengraine Technologies, a fully integrated biotechnology and bio-informatics company. "BioAgri will be a very strong sector in the years to come, in view of the Indian government's decision to open the market for biotech crops," said Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, HR Manager, Monsanto India. Monsanto, an integrated agri solutions provider, has introduced the country's first GM cropÃ¢â?¬â? Bollguard (Bt cotton). Dr Gautham Nadig, director, Metahelix Life Sciences, commented, "Indian market is big and value lies in making products suited to Indian agronomy and markets."

Who are needed? Depending on the domain specialization of the company, the job categories vary and accordingly the qualifications required also differ. Morawala-Patell said, "The different job categories at Avesthagen are technical, scientific, business development, administration, finance, legal, PR, clinical, product development and software programmers." She added, "We have a separate bioagri segment with state of the art laboratory and high throughput technology to cater to various R&D services. We recruit people with PhD and MSc for the science aspect of business and MBA's for business development and other management related positions, LLB's and also people specializing in patent law."

Camson Bio Technologies, a Bangalore based agribiotech company, is into research, development and marketing of biopesticides and seeds. Dhirendra Kumar, CEO, Camson said, "The minimum qualification that we look for is BSc agriculture coupled with a dynamic and enthusiastic approach. A basic knowledge of crops, diseases, etc is essential for this field. For marketing MBA's are preferred."

Nunhems seeds, a subsidiary of Nunza BVÃ¢â?¬â?•a Netherlands based vegetable seed company, is involved in research, production and marketing of seeds throughout India. "We look for MSc and PhD degree holders in molecular biology, biotechnology, tissue culture and their main responsibility is molecular analysis of the material of both lab and field studies and maintenance of tissue culture plants," explained Dr Arvind Kapur, MD, Nunhems seeds.

Companies like Indo-American Hybrid Seeds (IAHS) and Prabhat Agri Biotech have independent biotech divisions, which employs scientists and technical assistants. Companies look out for candidates with strong subject knowledge, analytical and practical skills, focused approach and good communication ability.

Monsanto broadly focuses on three areasÃ¢â?¬â??agricultural chemicals like herbicides, hybrid seeds and biotech/GM crops. "For the R&D division doctorates and post doctorates with domain specialization and relevant experience are required. They should have a very high level of technical competence and analytical bent of mind. In the sales division, there is intake of candidates with diverse qualifications like MBA, MSc Agri, BCom, PhD, etc. Basically they should have the core ability to understand and explain to the farmers about the merits of the products. Experienced candidates (2-3 years of relevant experience even from a non-agri FMCG background) do have an advantage, but we also take in freshers. Our main focus is not on experience but on the potential of the candidates to deliver and do the job. We focus on a diverse profile," said Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Monsanto India.

Dr PS Rao, VP-Biotech, IAHS said, "We do employ postgraduate/PhD degree holders in biotechnology. If the candidate is strong in basics of plant sciences and is able to communicate well, then he has a better chance. This of course includes basic qualification/experience that is desirable. We look for individuals with commitment, who can use biotech tools to enhance crop productivity."

"Though it is not essential to have experience but a strong academic record and a clear understanding of the basic science is required," he added. But experience is an important selection criterion in some companies as Dr Sateesh Kumar of Prabhat Agri opines, "Candidates are selected after personal interviews and experience gives a definite selection edge as bioagri requires more

technical and practical lab-oriented skills apart from intelligence".

Selection Process

trend

- In most of the companies the size of the core work team ranges from about 35 to 100.
- The agribiotech market in 2002-03 was Rs 110 crore in 2002-03 (GM crops, biopesticides and biofertilizers)
- The GM seeds business was Rs 16.8 crore from Mayhco.

Inviting resumes, screening, short-listing and then interviews is the standard procedure of selection. "At Monsanto recruitment takes place through consultants or through the career section on Monsanto India's website where interested candidates can post their resumes. These resumes are screened and shortlisted candidates have to appear for two rounds of interviews. But in case there is recruitment on a large scale then, in addition, there is a general discussion round also. Lastly there is a reference check," elaborated Dipankar, Monsanto India. Dr Rao, IAHS said, "there is an HRD division and the candidates are taken in through a selection committee of experts in the respective field."

Campus recruitment is the norm in some companies. As Morawala-Patell said, "We are always on the look out for quality people depending on the projects executed and domain knowledge of an individual. Since biotechnology as a sector has close links with academia, campus recruitment are one of the avenues to find aspirants willing to work in the biotech industry." "Campus recruitment is done and some of the institutes where we go are Gandhi Krushi Vighnana Kendra (GKVK), Bangalore, MANAGE, Hyderbad and GB Pant Agricultural University, Uttaranchal," informed Dhirendra Kumar of Camson.

Constant upgradation of employee skills and the awareness of the latest developments is facilitated by the companies through a range of training programs. "Training is provided as and when required. For example in areas such as commercial micropropagation the candidates are put on training for a period of 6-12 months within the organization," said Dr Rao, IAHS.

"There are regular product training programs in the segments of agri chemicals, hybrid seeds and GM crops. We have Monsanto Advanced Sales Training (MAST) for the sales and marketing division, " said Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Monsanto.

In the near future agribiotech will no longer be a discrete sector but will become an extension of the existing agricultural system and the industry will see a slow shift from chemical to gene- based solutions in agriculture.

Rolly Dureha

Â