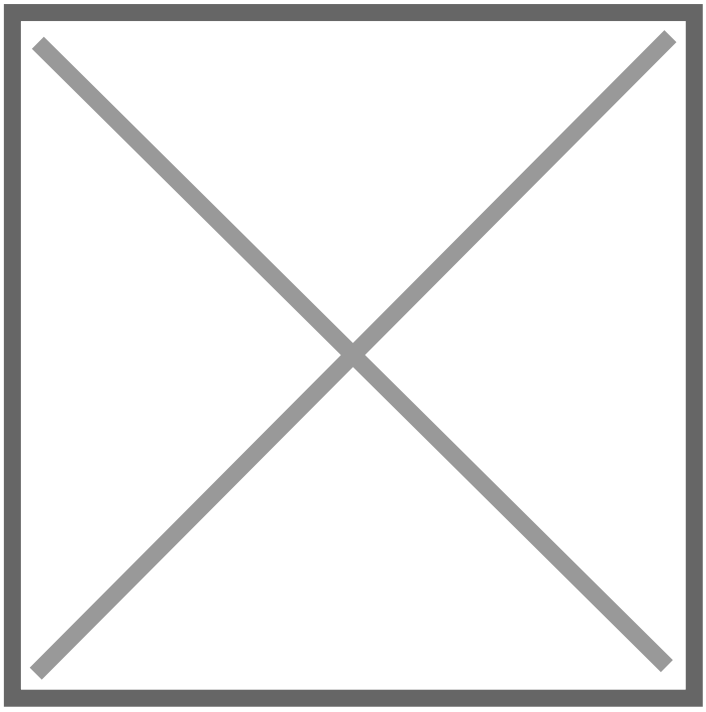
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Players see good potential for hybridization ovens

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A lot of basic research is going on in India but the market for hybridization ovens is yet to pick up. With their range of quality products, multinationals are scoring over local companies.

Hybridization ovens are fast becoming the preferred method of hybridization technique in today's laboratory. Incubations take place inside the oven, under constant rotation, providing even distribution of probe solution over the membrane. While there are other solutions available for hybridization applications, hybridization ovens offer better agitation, higher throughput and require less volume per membrane area, resulting in savings. Hybridization oven has various applications in research activities such as molecular biology assays, southern (DNA) hybridizations, northern (RNA) hybridizations, western blot, gene separation, gene expressions and gel documentation.

There are a couple of companies in India which are manufacturing hybridization ovens to meet the local needs. But most of the requirement is met by multinationals that are marketing their products through distributors/dealer network in the country. Neolab Instruments, Shambhavi Impex, Nu Tek Instruments are a few local manufacturers who produce these equipment. Besides these companies, multinationals like Thermo Electron Corporation, Centurion, Amrex, Techny are selling these ovens through dealers in India. MediSpec Instruments India Ltd, a distributor for UVP in India, Spinco Biotech representing Affymetrix in India, Sigma Aldrich, Amersham Biosciences (now part of GE Healthcare) are the other few companies which supply hybridization ovens in India.

"We were into manufacturing and marketing of hybridization ovens for over five years. But we discontinued with this product. We found out that there is no huge market potential and quality is one of the factors. Companies prefer products from multinationals against Indian manufacturers although we offer them at an affordable price. We used to sell 8-10 units a year," said GG Pillai, director, Pooja Lab Equipments.

Vippul Chhatbar, managing director, MediSpec Instruments India Ltd, which is representing UVP in India, said, "There are hardly few companies in India which are into manufacturing hybridization ovens. About 80-100 units are sold in India. The local companies are finding it difficult to sell their products in this competitive market. Multinational companies with their quality products have actually capitalized on the market. These products are available in the range of Rs 1.5Ã¢â?¬â??2.5 lakh."

Sharing similar views, Srikanth Lele, partner, Neolab Instruments said, "We do sell 1-2 units of hybridization ovens per month on enquiry. And I feel about 100 units are sold in all in a year. Although the locally available ovens are priced at one fifth of the price of a multinational product, still most of the life sciences companies/ research institutes prefer imported ovens. This I feel is mainly because of their better quality when compared with locally available products. India has been doing well in basic

research. And this is picking up with more investments from public and private sector. Considering these points, there is a good market potential for hybridization ovens in the near future in India."

However, K Iswara Dutt, managing director, Nu Tek Instruments Pvt Ltd, a manufacturer and wholesale supplier of scientific and laboratory instruments, hospital and medical disposables, educational items and other products, said, "We see a change in R&D activities in India in the last couple of years. And the now the market for hybridization ovens is picking up. It will grow at rate of 20-25 percent in the next five years. At present we see about 150- 200 units sold in north India. Locally produced ovens are available at Rs 40,000-50,000 per unit - one third of the cost of the imported ones. Research institutes, biochemistry labs, and biotech companies use these ovens. It will be a capital investment for these organizations."

The Association of Biotech Led Enterprises (ABLE), a lobby group for the biotech industry in its pre budget recommendations to the finance ministry has requested for expansion of the list of capital goods under list 27A and 28 and easing of norms. ABLE noted that the concession presently provided to biotech companies permitting duty free import of equipment as per List 27A and List 28 by manufacturers having an R&D wing registered with the DSIR, to the extent of 25 percent of the FOB value of exports made in the previous year is not beneficial. Hence it recommended expanding the List of Equipments provided in List 27A and List 28 to cover equipment such as hybridizations ovens required for R&D activities besides equipments used in production.

This will support the companies, which are into manufacturing and marketing of hybridization ovens. And the market will pick up in the coming few years.

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