

Danisco Venture makes strategic investment in WellGen

Danisco Venture has made a strategic investment in the US start-up company WellGen Inc. The New Jersey-based company is developing proprietary disease prevention products for the human food, pet-food, dietary supplement, and human therapeutic markets. WellGen's biotechnology-based technical platform is screening the effect of food and related substances on the expression of genes associated with human disease. WellGen is developing proprietary substances that, if successful, will contribute to reducing the risk of certain types of cancer.

Danisco's venture unit was established earlier this year. Danisco Venture focuses on creating significant value growth by investing a total amount of DKK 500 million (approx. USD 60 million) in ventures with high value-added products, services or technology platforms relevant to Danisco.

Recent research in genomics has resulted in identification of genes associated with specific human diseases. Now that some of these genes have been isolated, it is possible to identify foods that turn these genes on or off. By turning off a gene associated with onset or proliferation of a disease or turning on a gene with protection against a disease, it may be possible to reduce the risk of human or animal disease.

WellGen's first product candidate is based on orange peel. The specific extract was identified by screening fractions of orange peel extract for their effect on expression of genes in cells that are associated with colon cancer. The cancer preventive properties were validated in short and long-term mice feeding studies. To date, the results have shown a dramatic effect on prevention of colon cancer in mice. Soon, the orange peel extract product will be tested in human clinical studies at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey. The orange peel extract was developed for WellGen by Florida Flavors, a US flavour house Danisco acquired in April 2001.

Apart from discovering the extract's impact on the prevention of colon cancer, other substances with a positive impact on cancer have been identified by WellGen Inc. An example is an extract from black tea.

WellGen holds an exclusive license to technology developed by Rutgers University and the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Rutgers is a major shareholder in WellGen.

Mr. Anders Wilhjelmsen, Vice President, Danisco Venture:

'WellGen originates from Rutgers University, which has a strong reputation in food science. The company is targeting the overlap in the market between food and medicine and we see interesting possibilities in exploring this area. In addition, Anders Wilhjelmsen points to the fact that WellGen, apart from having a value in itself, also fits perfectly into Danisco's activity within extraction of flavours and other natural products.

Dr. David Evans, CEO of WellGen: 'We are pleased with the product portfolio that we have licensed based on natural products for cancer prevention. Having Danisco as a strategic investor gives WellGen a strong partner that has extensive knowledge of the food industry. Also, Danisco

can help WellGen in getting our products commercialised faster – this is a great opportunity for both of us.'

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Danisco Venture is a venture unit within Danisco A/S - one of the world's largest producers of ingredients for the food and beverage industry. Danisco Venture focuses on creating significant value growth by investing in total DKK 500 mill. (approx. USD 60 mill) in ventures with high value-added products, services or technology platforms, which are relevant to Danisco. Danisco Venture is a small entrepreneurial unit, which draws on Danisco's significant worldwide expertise in technology, intellectual property, as well as global application and marketing know-how. Danisco has for several years given priority to R&D, which has lead to a position among the most knowledge-intensive companies in its business.

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