

# **PBL / John Innes Centre Joint Venture Acquired**

**Norwich company IDna Genetics, which provides DNA services to seed companies, agricultural businesses and the genetics research community, has been sold to a leading local genetics entrepreneur.**

Former Sainsbury Laboratory and John Innes Centre scientist and new owner Dr Thomas Haizel will become managing director of IDna, while IDna's former Chief Executive Officer Dr Pete Isaac will become its scientific director.

Dr Haizel, who has been working with Dr Isaac for the past eight months prior to the sale, said he planned to build on using the expertise and new DNA techniques developed by Dr Peter Isaac and his team at IDna Genetics to provide DNA testing services for the food authenticity testing market.

They will work on developing bespoke tests that can determine, for example, the type and proportion of different fruit juices in a commercial blend. Speciation tests could also be developed to detect types of pine nuts which appear the same as other varieties but which have an undesirable aftertaste. Similarly, speciation tests could help identify types of tomato which look the same but which have different taste characteristics. These tests can be used by retailers to provide assurance to their consumers.

IDna Genetics was set up 10 years ago as a joint venture between the plant and microbial research institute the John Innes Centre and independent technology management company Plant Bioscience Limited (PBL), both on the Norwich Research Park.

The John Innes Centre and PBL have now sold their shares in the firm to Dr Haizel. Dr Haizel is also Managing Director of Anglia DNA, one of the fastest growing DNA testing laboratories in the UK. IDna Genetics will continue to operate as a separate business with Dr Haizel as sole proprietor.

**Dr Thomas Haizel** said: "this is an excellent opportunity to work in several markets and bring science to the wider public."

**Dr Pete Isaac, scientific director of IDna**, said: "We are really excited by the new directions envisaged by Dr Haizel, and will be rapidly moving into new areas of DNA analysis."

**Professor Mike Bevan, of the John Innes Centre** and one of IDna's former directors, said: "The acquisition of IDna provides an excellent opportunity to build an integrated genotyping company that provides services for agriculture, food authentication and many other applications. The Norwich Research Park is an ideal location for developing this industry due to the proximity of health, food and agricultural based research and development."

**Dr Jan Chojecki, chief executive of Plant Bioscience Limited**, said: "I have been pleased to see IDna grow since its set-up. IDna's technical capability will be matched Thomas' entrepreneurial business development skills and will continue to be an asset to Norwich Research Park and beyond."

**Ends**

## Notes to editors

### **About Dr Thomas Haizel:**

*I moved to Norwich in 1998 to work as a Postdoctoral Fellow in The Sainsbury Laboratory at Norwich Research Park (NRP).*

*In 2000 I moved across to the John Innes Centre, also based on the research park, to study artificial plant chromosomes. Finally in 2004 I set up my own business – Anglia DNA Services, which provides a fast, accurate and confidential test to determine paternity issues. Since then the business has gone from strength to strength; in 2005 the laboratory received accreditation from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service, followed by accreditation from the Ministry of Justice in 2006. Our accreditation is testimony to the strict laboratory procedures we abide by. Every month we conduct increasing numbers of DNA tests for legal purposes such as immigration, child support issues, changing a birth certificate and probate.*

*In February 2011, we launched AssureDNA – the UK's first off the shelf paternity testing kit, now available in Boots stores nationwide, the product has been a huge success, for us, the opportunity to retail our product in Boots is the greatest event that has happened to date.*

*Anglia DNA launched a drug and alcohol testing service in early 2012, as a result of the huge demand for this service by local authorities and solicitors involved in family law. It has since extended the drug testing services to various organisations including those in the transport, energy and healthcare sectors.*

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### **About IDna**

IDna is a service business offering genotyping and GMO testing services to the plant breeding industry and academia.

[www.idnagenetics.com](http://www.idnagenetics.com)

Contact: 01603 450941

### **About the John Innes Centre**

JIC is an independent, international centre of excellence in plant science and microbiology. Our mission is to carry out fundamental and strategic research, to train scientists and to make our findings available to society. The scientific research at the Centre makes use of a wide range of disciplines in the biological and chemical sciences, including microbiology, cell biology, biochemistry, chemistry, genetics, molecular biology, computational and mathematical biology.

[www.jic.ac.uk](http://www.jic.ac.uk)

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### **About Plant Bioscience Limited**

Plant Bioscience Limited (PBL) is an independent technology management company specialising in plant, food and microbial science. Our services are available to any researcher or research organisation that is seeking assistance and advice with protecting and commercialising new technology.

[www.pbltechnology.com](http://www.pbltechnology.com)

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### **About the sale of IDna**

IDna was owned by the John Innes Centre (61%) and Plant Bioscience Limited (39%). The sale took place on 15 May 2014.