

DOING BUSINESS IN THE EUREGIO MEUSE-RHINE
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CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

DOING BUSINESS IN THE USA

[COM: Aachen, November 28]

In view of the economic importance of the US, the Chambers of Commerce in Aachen, Eupen, Hasselt, Liège, Maastricht and Verviers are holding a series of Euroregional meetings, called: 'Doing Business in the USA'. During these sessions, information will be provided by specialists and businesses with experience of the legal, economic, political and cultural situation in the US. The sessions will be held in English. At a shared lunch, there will be an opportunity to discuss the situation with business people from the entire Meuse-Rhine region and there will also be the option of project cooperation. These sessions are sponsored by the EU's Interreg III Program for Meuse-Rhine, with co-financing from the State of North Rhine Westphalia, the Walloon region and the Belgian Province of Limburg. If you are interested, please contact your Chamber of Commerce. The fee for a session is EUR 50.- per person.

<http://www.aachen-ihk.de>

THE CHINA TRADE

[COM: Aachen, November 28]

Business with China is growing. The Aachen Chamber recently invited a Chinese textile business delegation to a cooperative meeting with the local textile trade. Twenty companies, represented by a group of about 50, took part in the meeting mid November. 'We are delighted', said the representative of a textile mill in Changzhou (Jiangsu), 'that long term business options are going to develop as a result of these personal contacts.' On this basis, the Euroregional Chambers are planning a business trip to China in 2004. Information will be available at a later date.

<http://www.aachen-ihk.de/>

PLASTICS PLATFORM

[COM: Maastricht, November 25]

The Meuse-Rhine Plastics Platform is holding a meeting on December 9 from 15.00 – 18.00 hrs at the Hogeschool Zuyd, Nieuw Eyckholt 300 in Heerlen. As there are more than 250 companies in Meuse-Rhine involved with processing plastics, the Aachen and South Limburg Chambers have taken the initiative to establish a Euroregional Plastics Platform. The objective is to allow members to exchange information and meet informally.

<http://www.hszyud.nl/>

MATCHING WALLOON BRABANT(B)

[COM: Maastricht, November 25]

The Southern Netherlands Chambers of Commerce are organizing a matching day to introduce their members to Walloon Brabant and its business opportunities, on February 12, 2004. The Province of Walloon Brabant, located to the south of Brussels, has a large number of international, high-tech businesses, including several major global players, such as: GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals (<http://www.gsk-bio.com>), producing vaccines; Ion Beam Application (<http://www.iba-worldwide.com>), a leader in the field of particle accelerator technology (making cyclotrons) and nuclear medicine; I.R.I.S. (<http://www.irislink.com>), leader in the 'document to knowledge' market - converting paper documents to digital formats; and Vigan (<http://www.vigan.com>) which manufactures bulk materials handling systems.

The objectives of the matching day are to give a picture of the opportunities available in the Walloon Brabant region and a chance to meet potential partners. (to aid the search for matches, participants have been asked to complete a registration form with details about their companies). The matching day will include a visit to The UCB Group (<http://www.ucb.be>), one of the largest enterprises in Belgium, a world class pharmaceutical and specialty chemical company, with a focus on pharma and surface specialties

The target groups are from businesses active in the following sectors:

- Mechanical construction supplies,
- Plastic processing,
- Automation and process control,
- Engineering (general and environmental technology)
- Industrial maintenance.

This day is being organized with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Walloon Brabant (in Nivelles).

For further information contact Bernard Piette, tel. 043-350 66 13, or send an e-mail to bpiette@maastricht.kvk.nl
<http://www.maastricht.kvk.nl>

TV COVERS THE MEUSE-RHINE OPTION

[COM: Aachen, November 17]

About 60 companies met in Selfkant-Tüddern on November 17 for a briefing on business opportunities in Meuse-Rhine. Aachen Chamber Executive, Frank Malis, pointed out that business had not yet begun to grasp the scale of the prospects offered by the Euroregion, which has a population of 3.7 million. In order to develop cross-border cooperation, the Meuse-Rhine Chambers aid companies in gaining access to neighboring markets - within the framework of national and EU Interreg funding programs. The Dutch TV station, RTN editie Sittard-Geleen, covered this event.

<http://www.rtnet.nl/>

WOLFRAM KUSCHKE IN AACHEN

[COM: Aachen, October 28]

The North-Rhine Westphalian Minister for Europe, Wolfram Kuschke, visited the Meuse-Rhine Chambers with Jürgen Roters, the current chairman of Meuse-Rhine, and discussed the issue of legal obstacles to cross-border cooperation. The current legal framework stands in the way of cooperation between Maastricht and Aachen, in that it does not permit a joint public law institution to be established.

The Meuse-Rhine authority itself could no doubt use new powers allowing such competence, as it has, to be upgraded. Assistance in the area of Avantis was also discussed to allow companies establishing there to choose the national legal regime that they wished to adopt. The dialogue will be continued next year in the North-Rhine Westphalian government offices.

<http://www.aachen.ihk.de>

AACHEN'S GLOBAL REGION

[COM: Aachen, October 14]

Globalization means a lot to business in the Aachen Chamber's area. A location at the heart of Meuse-Rhine places an important role, says Chamber Manager Frank Malis. In general, France is Germany's most important business partner, but in the Aachen region the biggest partners are the Netherlands and Belgium, followed by France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy.

This information is drawn from an updated export questionnaire in which 1200 companies took part. Also among the top ten foreign trade partners are Britain, Spain, Denmark and the US. With its export quota of 39%, Aachen is above the national average at 38%. In some areas, such as the city of Aachen and the district of Düren, the percentage of goods exported goes up to 44%. A rise of 5% is forecast for the coming year.

<http://www.aachen.ihk.de>

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

EUR 4.2 M FOR MEUSE-RHINE

[BIZ: Maastricht, October 28]

EUR 4.2m has been granted in Interreg project funding to a series of Meuse-Rhine projects. They include: the project on organic light admitting diodes (OLEDs), which will be run in cooperation between the universities of Aachen, Liège [and most probably Aixtron in Aachen]. EUBAN, for the development of a network of Business Angels. These are private individuals who provide venture capital for the development of SMEs. The Meuse-Rhine Triangle project will develop a unified communication concept for the Euroregion and on the tourist front the cities of Maastricht, Aachen, Hasselt and Liège will set up a project called *Coeur(s) des villes* to promote their cities centers. This follows on from the successful Shopping Plus project.

In Belgium's German-speaking region the professional training of butchers will be continued in the Eupen abattoir. The Aachen establishment will be closing down in 2005. There will also be funds for on the job training, for which EUR 200,000 has been released.

A further project is history, covering the daily life of people who live along the borders and a final project is People to People, a smaller project. The Meuse-Rhine executive has met for the last time under the presidency of Jürgen Roters. The province of Liège will take over the chair for the next session.

<http://www.aachener-zeitung.de>

500,000 EXTRA TONS FOR ALZ

[IND: Genk, October 23]

The Genk steel company, ALZ, can now ship 500,000 tons more steel because of the extension of the rail connections to its Ugine/ALZ plant, This means that ALZ, part of the Arcelor steel group, remains the biggest client for the cargo arm of the Belgian Rail (NMBS) system in the Genk area. The NMBS has invested EUR 840,000 in the expansion of the railhead connection at ALZ.

The operation started in 2001 and will be completed at the end of this month. The company also took a new quay into service in September, which means that water transport can be increased threefold. The start of operations at the new railhead means that ALZ can ship 800,000 tons to the Arcelor rolling mills in Charleroi and receive 700,000 tons of freight in return.

ALZ will also ship 300,000 tons of scrap and 100,000 tons of finished products. The NMBS will be running B-Cargo trains three days a week from ALZ to provide the plant in Charleroi with work. This is also true in the opposite direction. ALZ is also to make use of the additional capacity at Genk Station and Genk North. New connections are being looked at in the canal area at Puurs; at a new factory in the Genk canal area and various operations in the Kristalpark in Lommel are also being examined.

(Source: Het Belang van Limburg)

<http://www.hbvl.be>

RAIL TEST CENTER FULL

[BIZ: Wegberg-Wildenrath, October 21]

Siemens rail test center at Wegberg-Wildenrath has business for two years of work on its order books, according to a company spokesman. Starting in 2004, the second series of the ICE 3 high-speed train will be tested at the center.

<http://www.siemens.com>

12 SMES FOR BRUSTEM

[BIZ: St Trond, October 21]

The city of St-Trond has sold land, which was part of the former air force base at Brustem, to 12 SMEs. The 3.7 ha are going to provide 50 new jobs making a total of 80. Six of the 12 companies come from St Trond. They are: Freal Metalworking, the Limburg Bewakingsdienst (Security), Vigalex, which makes sheds and sells them, Serge Wauters, a manufacturer of industrial doors and metal profiles, Elektro Vanlangendonck and interior specialist Reno Advice. Six companies from outside St-Trond are the logistics company Verobal from Wellen, the carpentry firm Geysenbergh from Nieuwerkerken, Lummen's Alro International that sells industrial goods, Jans Transportefficiëntie from Wellen, Mans from Zoutleeuw, a garden architect and drive builder, and MKC from Borgloon that sells building materials.

The 37.5 ha area will produce EUR 565,000 for the city and the companies will be investing EUR 4.5m. They have given guarantees of employment to the city and that they cannot speculate with the land. A further 45 ha is still available for industry.
<http://www.hbvl.be>

JUELICH'S HIGH-TECH MALL

[BIZ/LIFE-SCI: Jülich, October 21]

Jülich's business park at Königskamp is growing and the first tenants, Jülich Fine Chemicals GmbH (JFC) and AC Biotec GmbH, have moved in. JFC had been in the DASGIP building, but now they are starting in their own premises. AC Biotec has followed a similar path. On the ground floor of the new building both companies have 340 m² and around 150 m² of office on the first floor. Further space is also reserved for them. Their staff includes chemical engineers from Jülich.

JFC is expected to achieve revenues of EUR 1m next year to break even and the intermediate period to achieve EUR 3 to 4m, with a staff of 15 to 20. In 2006, AC Biotec should be into profit too. The principal activity of JFC is the development of enzymes for industrial applications. AC Biotec is concerned with services to the life science industries and the optimization of biotechnology processes.

<http://www.hightechmall-juelich.de/>

MARKETING AACHEN

[BIZ: Aachen, October 20]

A series of new publications to market Aachen as a technology region has been produced by the Aachen development company AGIT. They are in German and English and cover the city region of Aachen itself, the districts of Düren, Euskirchen and Heinsberg and also the network of 13 technology, start off and service centers. There are flyers on areas such as the life sciences, the automotive industry and rail technology. Information on IT, performance materials and innovative productive technology will appear at the end of the year, to be used as an instrument in marketing the region.

<http://www.agit.de>

EUR 105M UM CALATRAVA CAMPUS

[BIZ/EDU/INFRA: Maastricht, October 18]

Work is soon scheduled to commence on the 75,000 m² and 66,000 m³ University of Maastricht campus in Randwijck which will provide accommodation for 600 students and will include guesthouse, sport facilities and offices. The investment volume will be EUR 105m and completion is scheduled for 2007. Santiago Calatrava the celebrated Spanish architect, who designed the new TGV station in Liège and is designing the Ground Zero subway station in New York, is the project architect. The project is in the portfolio of the Maastricht Housing Trust, Servatius.

<http://www.servatius.nl>

TESSENDERLO GROWS IN POTASH

[IND: Tessenderlo, October 14]

The Tessenderlo Group has decided to expand the capacity of the caustic potash (KOH) flakes unit of its French subsidiary, *Produits Chimiques de Loos*. By the third quarter of 2004, the factory near Lille will be able to produce up to 100 T 90-92% KOH flakes per day, roughly equal to the total output of caustic potash of the site.

Sales of caustic potash lye will be covered by the factory in Tessenderlo (B) where the capacity will increase substantially and reach 150 000 dmt KOH per year as soon as the new membrane facility for chlorine and caustic soda (NaOH) will be ready by end 2005. The combined capacity of the NaOH and KOH cell rooms will then be 365 000 mt chlorine. After this expansion Tessenderlo Group will be the largest European producer of caustic potash.

Tessenderlo Group is an international chemicals group with over 115 branches in 23 countries. Around 8,300 people work for the group, 2,300 of whom are located in Belgium. The company's consolidated turnover totaled EUR 1.9bn in 2002, from its five main areas of business (inorganic chemicals, fine chemicals, PVC, plastics converting, natural organic products). The group is a European and world leader in most of its products.

<http://www.tessenderlo.com>

TT-CENTER OPENS

[BIZ: Hasselt, October 15]

Today sees the opening in Hasselt of a major shopping center by Steve Stevaert. The TT-Center will be completed in January with a fitness center and swimming pool on the second floor. Deichmann, JBC, C&A, Torfs en H&M are opening on the ground floor and within the next ten days. The second Belgian Media Markt will be open for business on the first floor, producing 70 new jobs by itself. Bart Smit and Casa will open in the basement next week and Kreatos Hairdressers on the first floor in November.

<http://www.brf.be>

AGIT AT 20

[BIZ: Aachen, October 14]

The Aachen Development Company, AGIT, has been responsible for the start-ups of 249 companies in the region during a 20-year period and for 1000 of new jobs. Among the major businesses, which developed from the AGIT relationship are world toppers like Aixtron, Parsytec and Ford Research lab - which employs 100 scientists. AGIT was the first center for start-ups in the Federal Republic of Germany.

<http://www.wdr.de>

COMPOSTING IN MAASTRICHT

[IND/INFRA: Maastricht, October 8]

The multi-utility group Essent, with a leading position in the waste-processing sector, has opened a renovated composting plant in the Beatrixhaven in Maastricht, which meets EU legislation to come into effect in 2005. The focus is on economic and ecologically responsible processing. The Maastricht plant demonstrates the role of innovation and technology in maintaining ecological balance and sustainability.

The opening ceremony was carried out by Councilor Wim Hazeu, in the presence of 200 industry specialists, there for a follow-up seminar.

<http://www.essent.nl>

SABIC HQ: SITTARD-GELEEN

[BIZ: Sittard-Geleen, October 7]

Saudi-based, SABIC EuroPetrochemicals is going to build its new headquarters in Sittard-Geleen. SABIC with annual sales of six million tons of polyethylene, polypropylene and hydrogen is a leading Dutch-based business and its new headquarters will offer employment to 500.

SABIC's choice was a result of close cooperation between the Province and the municipality. The arrival of this multinational at the Fortuna Business Center in Sittard-Geleen is an important step in the series of investments in Limburg's industry and infrastructure. It means a long-term commitment of the chemical industry to the heart of Limburg. The province and the municipality are investing EUR 5.2m in the location of the new headquarters in Sittard-Geleen.

As part of a series of investments in logistics and industry, the Province and the municipality are preparing other projects, which will lead to reinforcement of the chemical and logistical sectors. Targets are: better access to business parks, knowledge and logistical facilities, also the development of the Maurits rail terminal and the Barge terminal in Born in addition to better access to the A2 highway. SABIC, with its logistical requirements, is in the right place at the right time.

<http://www.sabic.com>

FEV AT 25

[IND: Aachen, October 6]

To mark the 25th anniversary of FEV Engine Technology GmbH, which was founded by Professor Franz Pischinger in 1978, the Prime Minister of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, Peer Steinbrück, paid a visit to the company. FEV is an internationally recognized leader in the design and development of internal combustion engines, a major supplier of advanced testing instrumentation products and services to some of the world's largest powertrain OEMs.

The Company currently employs 1,000, 850 of whom are at its five locations in Germany. Mr Steinbrück noted that the company was not short of prospects and had a number of technological developments in the pipeline. FEV had developed products to make mobility easier and safer; to save resources and improve the interaction with the environment and thus were an example to others.

The PM also placed emphasis on three issues, which should be the future focus for domestic industry: education and training; innovative and competitive approach; and to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and the willingness to take risks.

<http://www.regionaldienst.nrw.de>

SCANA NOLIKO: EUR 100M

[BIZ: Bree, September]

Scana derives from the Celtic word 'Schaan', meaning water, the ultimate source of life. Noliko stands for 'Noordoost-Limburgse Konserven' (North-eastern Limburg Preserves). By 2003, the Bree producer of canned vegetables, sources and pre-packed meals, Scana Noliko, had achieved revenues in excess of EUR 100m.

This shows that growth, which started in 2001, after the management buy-out, has been ongoing. It is currently at 8%. The results, profits and assets have showed spectacular growth. See the website for the details. Scana Noliko has increased its staffing by 3% or 14 jobs and currently employs 465 on permanent contracts and 350 on temporary picking contracts. It is the 4th company in the vegetable canning business in Europe. Since the management buy-out in July 2000, the revenues have increased to EUR 100m today; this represents a growth of 25% in excess of EUR 19.1m. In the same period the result rose from EUR 4.1 to EUR 10.2 m and the net profit from EUR 1 to EUR 3.6m. The return on capital employed has grown from 3.8 to 9.2% today. There has also been a strengthening of the balance sheet with an improvement in the solvency ratio of 2.5%, guaranteeing further growth options.

(Source: KHNL)

<http://www.scana-noliko.be>

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

[INFRA: Maastricht, October 23]

A plan for local public transport in Meuse-Rhine is being developed. The first stage will be to develop a coordination point for further development of transfrontier traffic. Secondly, an external consultancy is establishing a Euroregional traffic plan (ENVP), the objective of which is to provide optimal links to the hubs at Liège and Aachen for the high-speed trains. Manfred Bausch, deputy manager of the Aachen region, informed the Aachener Zeitung that EUR 500,000 would be made available for this local Euroregional traffic from Interreg IIIa funds.

Third, by 2007, the Public Transport Now program will be initiated to improve bus and rail connections between Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands in the Meuse-Rhine area. This project includes the Euregiobahn, which currently links Stolberg, Aachen and Heerlen and will be extended to Maastricht and Sittard. Three new stops are planned. The province of Limburg (NL) wants to increase the frequency of the light rail system between Maastricht-Randwyck, Heerlen and Kerkrade and to add modern rolling stock that can be linked to cross border traffic.

There will be fast Interliner buses which will stop at more places in Maastricht; at the new Aachen-Schanz stop there will be a bus-rail connection. Geilenkirchen-Sittard will introduce a new bus link by 2006 at the latest. Heinsberg-Sittard will have an upgraded 436 express bus connection and local rail connections between Aachen and Liège will be on an hourly basis in 2004/2005.

Within one year the plan is to reduce the length of the bus trip from Aachen to Eupen from 45 to 30 minutes. The bus connection between Hasselt and Maastricht will be scheduled for every 30 minutes in the coming year and there are plans for a direct rail link from Aachen via Heerlen and Maastricht to Liège. Funding will have to be found for this. There will also be an extension to the Euroregion tickets plan. Next year, a website will be published on the Internet, where all local transport information will be found.

<http://www.aachener-zeitung.de>

MEDIA CITY

[INFRA: Liège, October 18]

A major new project is on the cards for Liège in 2005. This is the EUR 150m Media City complex. The project will include a cinema complex with 16 auditoriums, 36,000 m² of space for business, 2,400 parking spaces, a hotel, studios and offices. Those responsible for the project believe that work will start in the Longdoz quarter in 2004.

<http://www.brf.be>

BORN'S EUR 8M EXPANSION

[INFRA: Born, October 13]

The close-to EUR 8m extension to the Barge Terminal Born is virtually assured of approval by the Provincial Government on November 1, when they will decide on close to EUR 1m of the required sum, using an accelerated procedure. Following this the national government will provide EUR 2.2m, the municipality of Sittard-Geleen and Born, EUR 1m, and the Barge Terminal itself will be paying over EUR 4m. The money will provide additional warehousing space and infrastructure relating to the inner harbor on the Juliana Canal which will be expanded with new access and exits to the A2 highway at Holtum.

In 2010, the Barge Terminal should process 300,000 containers, 50,000 passenger cars, 25,000 trailers and other vehicles annually. This will make Born the most important logistical hub in South Limburg (Venlo is the logistical center for North Limburg). In Limburg there are around 800 companies in the logistics business. They employ 10,500 and are essential for major companies like NedCar, Sappi, SABIC and DSM. 150 Companies will make use of the container port. The Province is making it clear that water transport is becoming increasingly important with roll-on roll-off facilities and short-sea options, where coasters sail as far as England, Norway and Sweden. The extension to the Barge Terminal is of great advantage to the automotive and chemical clusters. Prognoses reveal that the developments at Barge Terminal by 2010 will reduce the number of kilometers driven on highways by 30 million saving eight million liters of fuel and environmental taxes.

(Source: Dagblad de Limburger)

<http://www.limburger.nl>

HEERLEN'S RINGS

[INFRA: Heerlen, October 7]

Heerlen and Parkstad Limburg have reached an agreement on the completion of the inner and outer ring roads. The point of departure is the need to get on with the job, starting in 2004, with the outer ring to be completed in 2013. Half of the EUR 186m budget will be paid by the province and half by the municipalities. There will also be an effort by both parties to acquire funding from third parties on a basis of equality.

A study has to be made of two alternative routes in the Kerkrade area. The agreement means that the four partners of Parkstad Limburg will be committed to a maximum of EUR 76.5m, EUR 7m being sought from external funders. If this does not succeed then the Parkstad Limburg fund will act as a guarantor. It means a maximum contribution of EUR 33.6m for Heerlen.

<http://www.heerlen.nl>

1000 HA ALBERT CANAL NET

[INFRA: Brussels, October 6]

The Flemish government has been planning to expand the Albert canal economic network to relieve the highways and provide additional space for business. 1000 Ha has been selected, of which 400 present problems, as the land is owned by other companies.

The land is required for waterway-related businesses and industries that ship by water. The start is to be made in Diepenbeek close to Genk South West. This is 34 ha site which links directly to the Genk industrial area. There is water frontage available; it is not an endangered area and there is no housing nearby. In the longer term the E313-314 (coal harbor-Lummen), Hasselt Canal and Lanaken have also been proposed.

<http://www.hbvl.be>

AACHEN'S RETT THERAPY

[LIFE-SCI: Aachen, October 27]

Pediatric Neurologist, Professor Vincent Ramaekers, and his team at Aachen's Klinikum University Hospital, in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Nenad Blau of the Laboratory of metabolic diseases, University Children's Hospital Zürich have demonstrated reduced folate transport to the central nervous system (CNS) in female Rett patients and shown that empirical treatment with oral folinic acid normalized the CSF levels of the active folate metabolite 5-methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF) and the serotonin end-metabolite 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid (5-HIAA). Folinic acid treatment also led to partial clinical improvement.

Previous cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) studies in Rett syndrome suggested reduced turnover of the biogenic monoamines, serotonin and dopamine. Because diminished turnover may result from CNS folate depletion, Professor Ramaekers and his colleagues studied transport of folate across the blood-brain barrier.

Compared to controls, patients with Rett syndrome had a normal immunoreactive soluble folate-binding protein sFBP1 in CSF, whereas the total folate binding capacity was disproportionately lowered. Empirical treatment with oral folinic acid normalized 5-MTHF and 5-HIAA levels in CSF, and led to partial clinical improvement.

Irrespective of the MECP2 genotype, 5MTHF transfer to the CNS is reduced in Rett syndrome. Folinic acid supplementation restores 5MTHF levels and serotonergic turnover. The lowered folate binding capacity of FBP is not explained by a defect of the FBP1 or FBP2 gene, but most likely occurs as a secondary phenomenon in Rett syndrome.

Rett Syndrome (RS) is a neurological disorder seen almost exclusively in females, and found in a variety of racial and ethnic groups worldwide. The child with RS usually shows an early period of apparently normal or near normal development until 6-18 months of life. A period of temporary stagnation or regression follows during which the child loses communication skills and purposeful use of the hands. Soon, stereotyped hand movements, gait disturbances, and slowing of the rate of head growth become apparent. RS is most often misdiagnosed as autism, cerebral palsy or non-specific developmental delay. While many health professionals may not be familiar with RS, it is a relatively frequent cause of neurological dysfunction in females. The prevalence rate in various countries is from 1:10,000 to 1:23,000 live female births.

See the link for ongoing developments in this program.

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

PORK MUSCLE SHOWS THE WAY

[LIFE-SCI: Liège, October 22]

A European team headed by Liège Professor Michel Georges has been looking at pigs to locate specific genetic predispositions. A predisposition to a number of diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and asthma, etc., is multifactorial and determined by a number of genes and environmental factors. The identification of these predisposing genes is a major challenge in modern genetics. It allows the introduction of preventive medicines, but it is very difficult to detect these predispositions, despite a few successes. The history of domestic animals makes them an easier target for analysis of multifactorial characteristics.

This has been illustrated by the identification of a mutation in the regulatory element of the IGF2 gene (insulin-like growth factor 2), which causes an increase in the muscular mass of pigs. Particularly clever genetic analyses allowed identification of the effect causing this growth in muscle from among 280 other mutations. These functional analyses have shown that the mutation enters one element inhibiting the production of the growth factor IGF2.

The identification of this gene's role and two others that influence the character complex among domestic animals, DGAT1 in cattle and CLPG in sheep have been made. A number of multifactorial characters assessed routinely in domestic animals is going to help to pursue the same objectives in human investigations in addition to having an impact in agricultural economy.

<http://www.ulg.ac.be/presse/>

MAKING UREA WITH THE MOUSE

[LIFE-SCI: Sittard, October 16]

Protomation B.V., a company in Sittard, has developed a new urea simulator in close cooperation with Stamicarbon. Urea is a fertilizer material used for direct application to crops or in the preparation of blended fertilizers. It is one of the most widely used dry granular sources of nitrogen, preferred by the fertilizer manufacturing industry because it is relatively easy to manufacture.

Recently, the official transfer took place of the new urea simulator from Stamicarbon to Fons Meijs, Director of Stamicarbon and DSM TechnoPartners (DTP). The simulator, which simulates the entire Stamicarbon urea carbon dioxide stripping process, works on a PC and will be used in all Stamicarbon urea-licensed projects. The simulator will not only be used for the training of the license-holder's operators in the new plants, but also for technologists and process managers at DSM TechnoPartners and Stamicarbon, who carry out licensing projects.

Project leader Geert-Jan de Laat, DTP, explains why it has been decided to develop a new urea simulator: " Good operators are indispensable for optimal plant operation. In the case of an alarm, they have to see what is wrong right away and take the appropriate measures to prevent loss of production. After a halt in production, they have to be able to start the line up again. Operators must be well trained and process simulators are an excellent aid, particularly when an operator is adapting to a new process."

Simulation Department

Up to a few years ago, Stamicarbon used the 'GIDS-simulator' (simulator guide), which it had developed, itself. The technology used had, however, in the meantime, become outdated and there was a requirement for a new state-of-the-art simulator with updated technology, thermodynamics and reaction kinetics. The simulator also had to be operated from a PC. Geert-Jan de Laat says: "we approached a company in Sittard and developed the new urea simulator in close cooperation with them. Protomation B.V. makes training simulators on the basis of its 'Process Studio' simulation package, which is an in-house development. By the way, this company was spun out from the simulation department of DSM/Stamicarbon and it specializes in process simulation and process management."

(Source: DSM Magazine)

<http://www.protomation.com>

PELTZER-LA TOURELLE ON TIME

[HEALTH: Verviers, October 9]

The reconstruction of the medical-technical center at the Peltzer-La Tourelle hospital center in Verviers is on schedule. Completion of the project, worth EUR 24m, is expected at the end of 2006. The new heating plant will be completed in January 2004 at a cost of EUR 1.1m, which will be covered by fuel economies.

<http://www.lesoir.be>

INTELLIGENT BIOMEDICAL CLOTHES

[LIFE-SCI, Aachen, October 8]

Scientists at Philips Research in Aachen, Germany, have developed a wearable, wireless monitoring system that can warn patients with underlying health problems, assist clinicians in the diagnosis and monitoring of patients at risk, and automatically alert emergency services in the event of an acute medical event.

Based on dry-electrode technology that can be built into common items of clothing such as bras, briefs or waist belts, Philips' wireless monitoring technology continuously monitors the wearer's body signals, such as the heart activity, to detect abnormal health conditions. The new technology enables the development of a new category of products in the personal healthcare area.

<http://www.research.philips.com/>

SPACE SCIENCE WINS

[SCI-TECH: Liège, October 8]

The Liège Space Center CSL has been awarded the Industrial Prize for 2003 by the Belgian Royal Society of Engineers and Industrialists (SRB11). This is the 50th anniversary of the prize. It is the first time that the prize has been awarded to a research center rather than a company. The Liège Space Center at the Liège Science Park at Sart Tilman has been active since 1974 as a European space agency center.

Its achievements have included tests for Meteosat, XMM satellites, the Infrared Space lab, Hipparchos, Artemis and Image. CSL has also participated in the Hubble Space Telescope and the camera for the Giotto probe, which photographed the Halley comet. Solar studies are also an important part of its activities with its Soho telescope, which made photograph of the solar corona. Most recently the new simulator, mentioned in the last issue, and instrumentation for the Herschel en Planck satellites were in the news.

<http://www.ulg.ac.be>

EVS MPEG STANDARD

[SCI-TECH: Los Angeles, CA/Liège, October 2]

The members of the MPEG Interop Initiative, Avica Technology Corp. of Santa Monica, California, Liège-based, EVS Digital Cinema, and newest member, GDC Technology Private Ltd, based in Singapore, today announced the completion and publication of their Digital Cinema Packaging Specification 1.04 that defines standards for interoperable mastering, content delivery, security and theater playout.

The purpose of the MPEG Interop Initiative is to specify an industry-wide standard for the exchange of MPEG encoded Digital Cinema content between the member companies. The announcement, made in conjunction with the opening of ShowEast in Orlando, Florida, signals a major step in providing customers with a competitive range of product choices that are interchangeable within large distribution networks.

The specification, developed with the participation of former interop member Grass Valley Group, will be delivered to representatives of DCI and SMPTE DC28. Copies may be obtained by contacting any of the MPEG Interop member companies.

"It is always a landmark event when established companies put aside their competitive differences and come together in the interest of moving an entire industry forward," says Don Bird, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Avica. "Avica is pleased to be able to participate in this effort to establish interoperable practices for distribution and exhibition of Digital Cinema content."

<http://www.evs.tv>