



Joint News Release

VIB acquires CropDesign site from BASF and launches its first agricultural biotechnology incubator

Nevele, Belgium, January 5, 2021 – VIB, a leading life sciences institute in Flanders, has signed an agreement with BASF to acquire its CropDesign site in Nevele, Belgium. VIB and CropDesign have had a close scientific relationship for more than 15 years. CropDesign, currently part of BASF's Agricultural Solutions division, was established in 1998 as a VIB spinoff and has grown into a biotech company specializing in plant phenotyping technology. The divestiture includes site infrastructure and intellectual property. All former CropDesign employees found new jobs within or outside BASF. Financial details of the transaction are not being disclosed.

VIB will establish a plant science and agricultural technology incubator at the CropDesign site. These facilities will serve as Flanders' premier center for agricultural biotechnology (AgBio) innovations for start-ups. VIB will provide a physical space for early-stage companies that work on the future of sustainable agriculture and food production, offer greenhouse space and provide an environment for likeminded companies.

Together with ILVO, the Flanders research institute for agriculture, fisheries and food, VIB will also deliver mentoring programs, explore collaborative opportunities and unlock networks to help early-stage companies mature quickly. The initiative is backed by the Flemish government to support economic recovery after the coronavirus pandemic in Flanders.

“Our vision is to establish Flanders' first AgBio incubator as the driving force behind innovations that produce the agricultural solutions of tomorrow. This will further fuel the growth of the AgBio R&D cluster around Ghent. With the acquisition of the CropDesign site, we want to create opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop their company in Flanders, taking advantage of the unique life sciences ecosystem and bringing high value jobs to the area,” said Jérôme Van Biervliet, Managing Director at VIB. “Plant

science with an emphasis on sustainability and climate change is an important sector for us at VIB. Leveraging the phenotyping platform will allow us to complement our commitment to support agricultural research and dedicated companies,” added Dirk Inzé, Science Director of VIB-UGent Center for Plant Systems Biology.

“By divesting our CropDesign site, we enable our long-term partner VIB to further develop and apply the innovative phenotyping technology in which CropDesign is highly skilled,” said Linda Trolinder, Senior Vice President Research & Development Seeds & Traits at BASF’s Agricultural Solutions division. “In the past years, we have developed many innovations in phenotyping at CropDesign that are successfully used at different BASF sites around the world. At the same time, this move allows us to adapt our portfolio and to focus even more on future key projects of our business strategy. We are proud of our long-standing commitment to the scientific community in the Ghent area.”

About BASF’s Agricultural Solutions division

With a rapidly growing population, the world is increasingly dependent on our ability to develop and maintain sustainable agriculture and healthy environments. Working with farmers, agricultural professionals, pest management experts and others, it is our role to help make this possible. That’s why we invest in a strong R&D pipeline and broad portfolio, including seeds and traits, chemical and biological crop protection, soil management, plant health, pest control and digital farming. With expert teams in the lab, field, office and in production, we connect innovative thinking and down-to-earth action to create real world ideas that work – for farmers, society and the planet. In 2019, our division generated sales of €7.8 billion. For more information, please visit www.agriculture.basf.com or any of our social media channels.

About VIB

VIB is an excellence-based entrepreneurial research institute in life sciences located in Flanders, Belgium. VIB’s basic research leads to new and innovative insights into normal and pathological life processes. It unites the expertise of all its collaborators and research groups in a single institute, firmly based on its close partnership with 5 Flemish universities (Ghent University, KU Leuven, University of Antwerp, Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Hasselt University) and supported by a solid funding programme from the Flemish government. VIB has an excellent track record on translating basic scientific results into pharmaceutical, agricultural and industrial applications. Since its foundation in 1996, VIB has created 27 start-up companies, now employing over 900 people. More information: www.vib.be.

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