

Press Release

Europe's top marine biotechnology experts have met in Kiel International symposium and official opening of GEOMAR-Biotech

18 December 2015 / Kiel. Marine biotechnology is recognized as an outstanding research area with significant potential to contribute to the well-being of the society as well as to the economic growth and sustainable development. The recently established GEOMAR Centre for Marine Biotechnology (GEOMAR-Biotech) at GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel brought together top scientists from all over Europe at GEOMAR-Biotech symposium to highlight the potential of marine bioresources and their small-molecule chemical constituents for outstanding research and applications.

The symposium entitled "Challenges and Opportunities in Marine Biotechnology Research and Development in Europe" took place in 17-18 December 2015 at Wissenschaftszentrum Kiel with 100 participants from 13 nations. It featured talks of high profile experts from academia and industry, complemented by statements from politics and society with a shared interest in marine biotechnology. The symposium highlighted new trends and approaches for innovative uses of marine resources and their chemical components. In a panel discussion with all speakers, it was discussed how the existing obstacles in further development into products can be overcome.

Today, the second day of the symposium, is dedicated to mark the official opening of the GEOMAR-Biotech and to showcase the laboratories and on-going marine biotechnology research therein. GEOMAR-Biotech, a state-of-the-art centre dedicated to marine biotechnology and biodiscovery research, is the successor of the Kiel Centre for Marine Natural Products (also known as Kieler Wirkstoff-Zentrum, KiWiZ), which was founded in 2006 through financial support of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Employment, Transport and Technology Schleswig-Holstein. The new director of the centre, Prof. Dr. Deniz Tasdemir, has not only brought chemistry expertise, but also reshaped the research foci of the centre in the field of marine biotechnology and biodiscovery at GEOMAR. Professor Tasdemir says "KiWiZ has been a great platform for identifying bioactive metabolites from marine microbes, but GEOMAR-Biotech sees itself truly as a research centre with an extended focus to cutting-edge natural product chemistry and biotechnology on a broader marine repository. The combination of highly enhanced research facilities and expertise in analytical chemistry, chemical imaging and marine metabolomics techniques, as well as the successfully developed national and international networks will enable us to perform highly competitive research". GEOMAR-Biotech will investigate the chemistry, pharmacological activity, ecological functions and biotechnological potential of small molecule marine natural products. The expansion of the organismal repertoire, from only being marine microbes, to marine invertebrates (such as sponges), marine plants (such as seaweeds and sea grasses) and organisms that survive in extreme conditions (e.g. deep, polar seas or very hot ocean environments) will allow a higher rate of discovery of novel bioactive or functional molecules. The intense microbial communities (microbiome) contained by these organisms will constitute a major interest because they often are the real producers of the molecule(s) of interest.

GEOMAR-Biotech will perform innovative and high quality research in the emerging research topics by applying most modern, highly sensitive and automated techniques. A major application

area for GEOMAR-Biotech will be drug discovery. GEOMAR-Biotech has also identified strong potential for research in the field of aquaculture, including by-products and associated diseases. Further applications of modern marine natural product research lie in the field of functional ingredients, e.g. as new food additives, dietary supplements and cosmetics.

Visible signs of the new focus and the relaunch as a state-of-the-art research centre rather than a platform are the new name GEOMAR-Biotech and the new logo, which will be enrolled during the open day (18th December) at the facilities of the centre in Kiel. The motto of GEOMAR-Biotech will be "From Blue Ocean to Sustainable Products". GEOMAR-Biotech thrives to be a top research centre and a key partner for large academic or industrial initiatives, nationally and internationally.

Links:

www.geomar.de GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel

<http://www.geomarbiotech.de> GEOMAR Centre for Marine Biotechnology

<http://www.geomar.de/en/research/fb3/fb3-mn/symposium2015/> Symposium for Marine Biotechnology

Images:

Images are available for download at www.geomar.de/n4166

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