

Biotalys Awarded Multi-Year Grant to Develop New Biological Solutions for Cowpea and Other Legumes

Company to receive \$5.98 million in total from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to leverage its AGROBODY™ technology platform

Ghent, BELGIUM, and Research Triangle Park (NC), UNITED STATES – 20 October 2021, 07:00 CEST – Biotalys (Euronext - BTLS), an Agricultural Technology (AgTech) company focused on addressing food protection challenges with protein-based biocontrol solutions, today announced it has been awarded a multi-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to discover novel antifungal biocontrols for deployment to smallholder farmers. The project, identified as “Agrobodies for Crop Protection”, focuses on leveraging Biotalys’ AGROBODY Foundry™ technology platform to discover novel protein-based biofungicides with the ability to control *Cercospora canescens*, the causative agent of leaf spot disease, an important devastating disease of cowpea and other legumes.

Cowpeas – often referred to as “*black-eyed peas*”¹ after one of its subspecies – are a subsistence crop, often intercropped with sorghum, maize and pearl millet, providing millions of mainly African farmers, many of whom are women, an affordable source of proteins. According to estimates, cowpeas are cultivated on 14.5 million hectares of land, have a worldwide production of 6.2 million tonnes and are consumed by over 200 million people on a daily basis.² While the broad range of cowpea varieties has enabled to access more resistant varieties in certain growing regions, the impact of the leaf spot disease (*Cercospora canescens*) can still decimate up to 40% of the production for smallholder growers.

During the course of the four-year project, Biotalys will receive a \$5.98 million (€5.14 million) grant in non-refundable instalments to achieve, by the end of 2025, proof-of-concept of effective *on planta* protection of the cowpea crop from leaf spot by an AGROBODY™ bioactive with potential cross-efficacy against other *Cercospora* diseases (such as *C. beticola*) for broader application across different crops.

Patrice Sellès, CEO of Biotalys, stated: “We are delighted to receive this support from the Gates Foundation to apply our knowledge and technology to develop new biological solutions for the protection of cowpeas and other legumes, important subsistence crops for millions of smallholder farmers worldwide. Providing these growers with innovative and affordable tools to protect the yield and quality of their crops without compromising the health of their soils and the safety of their families creates an economical and societal benefit that cannot be achieved with existing chemical pesticides.”

“This is an incredible opportunity for the Biotalys team to leverage the antifungal know-how that we have built with our AGROBODY Foundry™ platform while developing our current product pipeline,” **said Inge Van Daele, Regulatory Head at Biotalys.** “The scope of this new project goes beyond innovation and technology development. This work is about sustainability and making a difference to

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/plant/cowpea>

² Kebede & Bekeko, (Cogent Food & Agriculture (2020), 6) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (<http://www.fao.org/3/au994e/au994e.pdf>).



the lives and health of millions of smallholder farmers and we are proud to have been selected by the Gates Foundation to make an impactful contribution.”

The project is aligned with Biotalys’ strategy to become an agricultural technology leader by developing unique proprietary protein-based food protection solutions and addresses various Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations, such as Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Life on Land (SDG 15).

About Biotalys

Biotalys is an Agricultural Technology (AgTech) company focused on addressing food protection challenges with proprietary protein-based biocontrol solutions and aiming to provide alternatives to conventional chemical pesticides for a more sustainable and safer food supply. Based on its novel AGROBODY™ technology platform, Biotalys has developed a strong and diverse pipeline of effective product candidates with a favorable safety profile that aim to address key crop pests and diseases across the whole value chain, from soil to plate. Biotalys was founded in 2013 as a spin-off from the VIB (Flanders Institute for Biotechnology) and is listed on Euronext Brussels since July 2021. The company is based in the biotech cluster in Ghent, Belgium. More information can be found on www.biotalys.com.

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