

Biotechnology innovation conference aims to spark new ideas

The Bio2Biz Conference, scheduled for Durban 20-23 September 2009, is a South African forum established to enable the biotechnology industry and the business community to identify opportunities where they can work together.

Participating organisations include the Innovation Fund, BioPad, Cape Biotech, eGoli Bio, LIFElab and PlantBio. The conference is being held in conjunction with the South African Microbiology Conference and delegates will have the benefit of registering once but being able to attend joint sessions and share evening functions.

McLean Sibanda, Innovation Fund patenting attorney and one of the speakers, said new ideas that lead to marketable inventions would enable the country to become a player in the global 'knowledge economy' boosting foreign investment and creating jobs. "Our problem is that the country's patenting rates have remained stagnant for the past 10 years." He explained how a 2007 Innovation Fund study on the state of patenting in the country found that foreign applicants filed about half of patent applications. "This is a direct indication of the low participation of South Africans in science and technology development."

Good ideas needed protecting, Sibanda added, in a way that would ensure competitive advantage. "We need to be less risk averse and more forgiving of failure if we are going to make our mark as a country of great inventors. Let's become a culture that celebrates innovative thinking." More details on the conference at www.bio2biz.org.

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