

New Laboratory's Mission to Play Part in Ensuring Global Food Security

- *Funding from BBSRC and DEFRA helps establish only R&D lab of its kind in the UK*
- *Research collaboration with Agform Ltd will support development of novel fungicide compounds for cereal crop protection*
- *'AOX Lab' is the product of first ever industrial partnership for University of Sussex*

Sussex/Hampshire, 18 October 2016: A new laboratory has been opened at Hilldale Research Centre in Wickham to develop novel fungicide compounds, based on groundbreaking research at the University of Sussex, as a result of the institution's first ever industrial partnership.

Work planned at the site will help to drive vital research into the control of respiratory activity in fungi which attack the world's major cereal crops. With the help of a recent £1m award, including a contribution of £602,390 from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), Professor Tony Moore, of the University of Sussex, will collaborate with Agform Ltd to accelerate the development of fungicide resistance inhibitors.

Fungal pathogens are adept at developing resistance to treatments by expressing an enzyme called the alternative oxidase (AOX). The novel compounds formulated by Professor Moore prevent this enzyme from being functional. With further development, these compounds may be effective for longer and require less frequent spraying of crops.

The AOX Lab represents a significant investment in UK industry and innovation, as the only UK-owned commercial research facility for new agrochemical actives, in the country. Agform's existing nanotechnology capability is a successful example of the government's investment in innovative technology and research, with a number of commercial products already derived from this technology currently being marketed in the UK and the EU. It was partly funded by two grants from the Technology Strategy Board (now Innovate UK), supported by DEFRA and BBSRC.

Professor Moore said: "The implications of this ongoing research are potentially huge, both in terms of protecting vital yields of wheat, barley and rice across the world, and lessening the environmental damage caused by multiple applications of fungicides."

John Misselbrook, Managing Director of Agform, said:

"Agform Limited are delighted to provide the facilities to support this project – our collaboration with the University of Sussex has inspired the company to strengthen our focus on R&D, and particularly to solving the international problem of resistance to agrochemicals. Any new product identified by this collaboration could be very important to the cultivation of cereal crops in the UK, and valuable to a global market."

Dr Ian Carter, Director of Research and Enterprise, University of Sussex, said:

"This is a great step towards realising the full commercial potential of Professor Moore's BBSRC-funded research, having worked closely with our business incubation hub, the Sussex Innovation Centre, over a number of years supported by the University's Enterprise Development Fund. It is essential that we support our researchers in maximising the impact of their work, and a big part of this is by taking the opportunity to bring innovative products to market."

-ENDS-



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Notes to Editors:

For more information about AOX Fungicides, please contact the **Sussex Innovation Press Office:**

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Further information on the AOX/Agform Industrial Partnership Award: <http://www.sinc.co.uk/news-article/aox-fungicides-receive-university-sussexs-first-industrial-partnership-award>

About the University of Sussex:

The University of Sussex was the first of the new wave of UK universities founded in the 1960s, receiving its Royal Charter in August 1961. It is among the leading research universities in the UK, with 98 per cent of its research rated as world leading, internationally excellent or internationally recognised (REF 2014).

About Sussex Innovation Centre:

The Sussex Innovation Centre is a stimulating environment for entrepreneurs, start-ups, growing companies and corporate innovators, offering flexible, professional office space and a comprehensive range of in-house support services designed to assist during the vital early years of operation. It is based at the Falmer campus of the University of Sussex, near Brighton.

The Centre was conceived as the flagship development of the 'Sussex Academic Corridor' (SAC), a unique collaboration between public, academic and business sectors. Now wholly owned by the University of Sussex, the Centre continues to be committed to harnessing the economic potential of the extensive education and research resources available in Sussex and across the South East. In 2015, the organisation opened its first off-campus hub in East Croydon, and plans are in place to open a third site in central Brighton next year.

About Agform Ltd:

Agform Ltd is a UK company that utilises advanced technology to develop and manufacture new and improved formulations and delivery systems for agrochemicals. The products derived from this work are defined by the safer and more effective use of chemicals in the protection of crops and in particular, with the aim to decrease the amount of chemicals used.