

The seventh National Biotechnology Congress in Iran was held in Tehran from 12-14 September 2011. Since many of our readers most likely did not find the opportunity to attend this conference, I take this opportunity to provide a summary of activities in this three day congress. In the seventh National Biotechnology Congress in Iran, dozens of talks and several hundred posters were presented. The topics of biotechnology-related subjects presented in this congress were wide spread and included: Transgenic animals, plant biotechnology, systems biology, next generation DNA sequencing, biotech market, biotech management, environment, pharmaceuticals, food industry, medical biotechnology, marine biotechnology, bioinformatics and ethics.

This congress was attended by hundreds of students, researchers, government officials and industry leaders from all corners of Iran. This congress was sponsored and/or supported by more than 25 national research centers, private institutes and government organizations including the presidential office. Holding regular National biotechnology meetings in the field of biotechnology in Iran is hoped to deepen the discussions of biotech-related issues in both academic and non-academic centers and encourage interactions between the interested parties. An interesting and novel aspect of this congress was an attempt to initiate a dialogue between the biotech leaders and religious authorities. The reality is that application of biotechnologies in different disciplines including genetic manipulation of plant and animal cells, food, ... has caused anxieties and social concerns in recent years. Therefore, any attempt to encourage dialogues between the biotech and religious leaders should be helpful in presenting biotechnology as a helpful technology to solve societal problems.

Today biotechnology is one of the fastest growing technologies worldwide as was predicted a couple of decades ago. The market value of biotech-related technologies is estimated to be over \$ 1000 billion worldwide and is dominated by the developed countries mainly due to the massive investments they did in biotech industry a couple of decades earlier. The question is whether the developing countries can develop the biotech industry segments of their economies soon enough to capture a portion of this huge market worldwide. Hopefully holding the seventh National biotechnology meeting in Iran would focus the attention of the scientific, economic and political leaders on this important issue.

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