

LIFE AT THE COAL FACE OF INDUSTRY/ACADEMIC COLLABORATIONS

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Outline

- Case study
- The technology
- The partnership
- History
- Lessons

Case study: agribiotechnology R&D

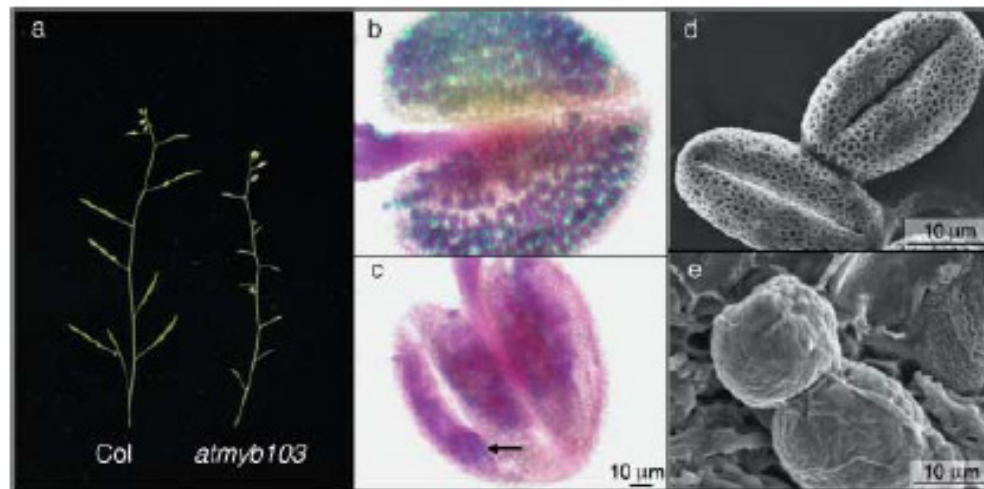
- R&D Context
 - Strong local R&D capabilities in universities, government and public research institutions
- Commercial context
 - Dominance of multinational conglomerates ('the big four')
 - Few local agribiotech companies
 - Historical wariness about public and regulatory climate for GM in food crops

The technology

- Novel reversible & inducible plant male sterility system
- ‘Platform’ technology
- Applications in food, oil crops, pasture, forage
- To assist hybridisation and to prevent errant spread of GM crops

Technology ctd.

Figure 2 Silique elongation and pollen morphology of wild-type and insertion mutant plants. (a) Elongated siliques in a wild-type inflorescence (Columbia, Col) and aborted siliques in a mutant inflorescence. Alexander's staining (Alexander, 1969) of a wild-type anther (b) and a mutant anther (c). Scanning electron micrographs of pollen from a wild-type plant (d) and a mutant plant (e). The arrow points to the collapsed pollen grains. Scale bar, 10 μ m.



The partnership

- La Trobe University and Australian (subs. of international seed producer and plant breeder)
- Four-year, \$1.5m R&D program to obtain proof-in-crops in three plants
- Successful ARC Linkage-Projects Application

History

- Twelve years of research, value \$6m.
- Funded by ARC and GRDC and internal cross-subsidisation and in-kind
- IP position: national applications for two patents under examination EU, US, Aust, NZ, RSA, India.
- Co-owned by LTU, VicDPI, GRDC
- Outlays on patents to date - \$200K
- Identifying a partner and doing a deal

Lessons

- Commercial partnerships can be the small tip of large icebergs
- Importance of a diverse ecology of R&D funding
- Essential for research institutions to have commercialisation capabilities:
 - Deal making delegations
 - Patent budgets and discretions
 - Marketing capability

Thank You

