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**GMAC PRESS EVENT
LAUNCH OF REVAMPED GMAC WEBSITE AND THE
GMAC STUDENT REPORTERS' CHALLENGE 2008**

**FRIDAY, 22 FEB 2008, 3PM
BREAKTHROUGH/DISCOVERY THEATRETTES,
MATRIX, BIOPOLIS**

PRESS KIT

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PANEL MEMBERS

A/Prof Chan Woon Khiong

Chairman, GMAC Subcommittee on Research
Associate Professor and Assistant Dean (Undergraduate Programme)
Department of Biological Sciences
National University of Singapore

A/Prof Peter Dröge

Chairman, GMAC Subcommittee on Release of Agri-Related GMOs
Head, Division of Genomics and Genetics
School of Biological Sciences
Nanyang Technological University

Mr Seah Seng Choon

Member, GMAC
Executive Director
Consumers Association of Singapore

Dr Wong Kwok Onn

Head, Survey and Safety Review Branch
Food Control Division
Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore

PROGRAMME

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| 14.30 | Registration of Media |
| 15.00 | Welcome Address and Launch of Revamped GMAC Website and the GMAC Student Reporters' Challenge 2008 by Dr Ngiam Tong Tau, Chairman, GMAC |
| 15.10 | Guided 'Tour' of Website and Briefing on the GMAC Student Reporters' Challenge by Ms Tan Kim Ping, Secretariat, GMAC |
| 15.30 | Questions and Answers |
| 16.00 | Reception |



Press Release – 22 Feb 2008

GMAC Launches Revamped Website and Student Reporters' Challenge

The Genetic Modification Advisory Committee (GMAC) has carried out a total structural and content makeover of its official website. It has also organized a creative writing and design competition – the GMAC Student Reporters' Challenge 2008. Dr Ngiam Tong Tau, Chairman of GMAC and former Chief of the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority, officially launched the website and competition today at a mega press conference attended by more than 250 student reporters.

The GMAC website can be accessed at <http://www.gmac.gov.sg>.

ENHANCED GMAC WEBSITE

Through a specialized subcommittee led by Prof Lee Sing Kong, Director of the National Institute of Education, GMAC has, since 1999, made numerous efforts to educate the public on issues related to genetic modification. These include the creation of a GMAC website in 2000 to provide reliable information on biotechnology, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and GM foods.

In 2001 and 2005, GMAC conducted nation-wide surveys on Singaporeans' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of GM technology and GM foods. The studies revealed that while only 20% of the Singapore population understood the basic concepts of genetic modification, those who access the internet frequently tend to have better awareness of the topic. In order to satisfy the population's growing appetite for knowledge in an increasingly wired Singapore, GMAC decided to carry out a total structural and content makeover of its official website, which was last revamped in 2004.

The new GMAC website is packed with information and resources to allow the public to better understand GM-related issues and the role of GMAC. The processes through which GM research activities and GMO commercial releases are regulated in Singapore are also outlined in the website. Scientists conducting research on GMOs and biotechnology companies interested in commercializing GMOs in Singapore can download the relevant guidelines.

Features of the new website include:

- Information on GMAC's membership
- An overview of the functions of GMAC, and the roles played by each of its four specialized subcommittees
- GMAC's recommendations and guidelines for scientific research and commercial release of GMOs
- Frequently-Asked-Questions on various subtopics ranging from GM food safety, to environmental impacts of GM crops, to biomedical applications of GM technology
- A ten-year (1999 – 2008) repository of GM-related news articles
- Online educational brochures on GM foods in four different languages
- Recommended readings
- Links and references to the various local, regional and international agencies and institutions dealing with GM-related issues
- Interactive quizzes, with varying degrees of difficulties, for visitors to test their knowledge on GM issues
- An online forum for members of the public to express their views on GM matters

"Fallacious claims on GMOs and GM foods are rampant on the internet. Through the GMAC website, we provide the public with a source of scientifically-sound and reliable information. It is our aim to dispel erroneous conceptions of the subject matter." Prof Lee conveyed.

"GM technology is likely to become increasingly common in our lives, be it in food, medicines, or other biotechnology products. Yet, the scientific concepts are not easy

to understand. The website is one of the several channels through which we communicate with the public to share our knowledge,” said Dr Ngiam.

GMAC STUDENT REPORTERS’ CHALLENGE 2008

The GMAC Student Reporters’ Challenge 2008 - a creative writing and design competition – is yet another new initiative by GMAC to educate the student population on GM issues. The competition is conducted in three categories catering separately for students in the upper primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary levels.

The competition attracted overwhelming response from the student population. Some 256 students from 24 primary schools and 29 secondary schools attended the GMAC Press Event - a mega press conference. As Student Reporters, the participants had their questions on GM technology, GMOs and GM foods answered by an expert panel.

The Student Reporters have been given till 21 March 2008 to create newsletters to report their findings at the GMAC Press Event. They are also required to carry out independent research and to incorporate the additional information into their work. Participants are to focus on specific GM-related themes ranging from the basic principles of genetic modification to the more complicated food and biomedical applications of the technology.

The entries will be judged by government officers, journalists, and scientists through a three-tiered system. GMAC expects to announce the results of the competition by June 2008.

The best entries from each competition category will be awarded with Borders gift cards valued at the \$1000 for the first prizes, \$600 for the second prizes, and \$300 for the third prizes.

The top entry from each category will also be mass produced and distributed to the public through the national libraries and the Singapore Science Centre. The Ministry

of Education will disseminate e-copies of these newsletters to all primary and secondary schools in Singapore.

“Over the past years, students have come in groups to ask us questions. They have great interest in the topic, and biotechnology has been given increasing emphasis in the school curriculum. Through the GMAC Student Reporters’ Challenge, we provide an additional opportunity for out-of-the-classroom active learning. We also want to give them the chance to share their knowledge with others.” Prof Lee conveyed.

ABOUT GMAC

The Genetic Modification Advisory Committee was established under the purview of the Ministry of Trade and Industry in April 1999. With members drawn from 12 agencies, GMAC oversees and advises on the research and development, production, use and handling of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in Singapore. It has since expanded its role to take on creation and enhancement of public awareness on GMOs and GM-related issues.

GMAC’s objective is to ensure public safety while allowing for the commercial use of GMOs and GMO-derived products by companies and research institutions, in compliance with international standards. In this regard, GMAC has published the Singapore Guidelines on the Release of Agriculture-Related GMOs and the Singapore Biosafety Guidelines for Research on GMOs.

Issued by GMAC

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