

Life Sciences

January 2007

Sector Profile

Overview

Summary	<p>As technologies converge, 'Life Sciences' is a generic title capturing a wide range of industry sub sectors such as biotechnology, therapeutics, medical diagnostics and devices, drug delivery, gene therapy, bioinformatics, clinical trials, agri biotech and industrial biotech.</p> <p>A key enabling technology within the sector is biotechnology. Only 30 years old, the biotechnology industry is a global powerhouse with over \$60bn in revenues. However this is a challenging industry in which it can take up to 10 years to bring a product to market at a cost of over \$1bn.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland approximately 50 companies generate turnover of around £300m.</p>
Employment	3,700
Companies	Companies in the life sciences sector include Almac Sciences, Norbrook Laboratories, Randox Laboratories, Fusion Antibodies, Perfecseal and Warner Chilcott UK.
The Future	<p>Drivers for change in the future include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- an ageing population;- changes in the delivery of healthcare away from "in patient" care to therapeutic methods and devices;- greater consumer interest and access to functional foods to promote health;- bioterrorism.

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Our approach to the sector

In line with Northern Ireland's Regional Innovation Strategy: Think/ Create/ Innovate (led by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment), the life sciences sector has been identified as a priority sector for Invest NI.

Invest NI actively engages with and promotes two key areas within Life Sciences. These are:-

- Cancer Biotech;
- Medical Devices;

Other areas where Northern Ireland has niche strengths include: tissue engineering; diabetes; bio-informatics; clinical trials; neurodegenerative diseases and infectious diseases.

Business Development Solutions

Invest NI offers an extensive portfolio of advice, assistance and support which can be tailored to meet the needs of companies either in particular sectors, or who are tackling specific challenges within their business. This covers areas such as strategy development, people development, research and development, exporting, energy management and e-business. Full details of our programmes and services are available from the [Business Development Solutions brochure](#).

Current Issues

- Access to early stage funding can be difficult
- Skills shortage in certain technical areas
- The regulatory regime for health products demands rigorous procedures and results in long lead times for product development
- The need for strong links between academia, business and clinicians in order to facilitate technology transfer and innovation
- Lack of “veteran” entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland with the experience and the time to mentor life science businesses.

Initiatives

The RTD Centres of Excellence programme supports the establishment of R&D Centres to stimulate leading edge, industrially exploitable and commercially focused research which will demonstrably improve the competitiveness of Northern Ireland industry. The programme is delivered by Invest Northern Ireland and funded under the European Union Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (PEACE II) managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and in partnership with

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the Department of Employment and Learning. Within the biotech sector Invest NI is supporting 5 Centres of Excellence. The total cost of these centres is £22.8m with Invest NI offering £7.7m of financial assistance. The Proof of Concept programme supports the pre-commercialisation of leading-edge technologies emerging from Northern Ireland's universities. It helps researchers to export their ideas and inventions from the laboratory to the global marketplace. **This pilot scheme has now come to an end and Invest NI will be reviewing the programme over the coming months.**

Invest NI has provided funding for three years towards the costs of development of a life sciences industry association, [BioBusiness NI](#).

Sector Events

In association with [Bio Business NI](#), Invest NI will be promoting the Northern Ireland life sciences sector at the following events:

Medica (the world's largest medical exhibition)

Bio Ireland Conference

Bio 2007 – Boston, USA

See [Invest NI's Event Planner](#) for more events, and see also the [Trade Events Programme](#) for trade missions in your sector.

Industry Links

BioBusiness Northern Ireland

www.biobusinessni.org

BiomedIreland

www.intertradeireland.com/index.cfm

DHSSPS R&D Office

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/ahp_research

Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)

www.dti.gov.uk/sectors/biotech/index.html

Almac Sciences Group

www.almac-sciences.com

Randox

www.randox.com

Centre for Genomic & Molecular Biodiversity

www.science.ulster.ac.uk/research/biomed/genomics.htm

Medical Polymers Research Institute

www.qub.ac.uk

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Useful Information Sources

Invest Northern Ireland sector information	www.investni.com/sector_guide_biotechnology.pdf
Halo- Northern Ireland Business Angel Network	www.investmentbelfast.com/HaloHome.aspx
Crescent Capital NI- Venture Capital in NI	www.crescentcapital.co.uk
Enterprise Equity Venture Capital Group	www.eeni.com
QUBIS Ltd	www.qubis.co.uk
UUTech Ltd	www.uutech.co.uk
Viridian Growth Fund	www.clarendon-fm.co.uk
Nitech Growth Fund	www.investni.com/nitechgrowthfund

Guides to the market research sources which are available from Invest NI's Business Information Services can be downloaded from the Publications A – Z section of the website (under S for Sector Guides).

Contact

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