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From idea to implementation. Grupa Azoty closer to breakthrough technology solutions

Only five months after the launch of its innovation accelerator programme Idea4Azoty, Grupa Azoty has selected eight solutions with high implementation potential from among several dozen R&D projects submitted. A letter of intent has just been signed between Grupa Azoty and ScienceBioTech of Wrocław, one of the programme entrants, to develop and implement a technology for producing modular plates to be used in osteotomies*.

Conceived and launched by Grupa Azoty in November 2017, Idea4Azoty is the first such programme on the Polish market offering support for innovative projects at any stage of development. Projects submitted so far span a range of topics, from environmental protection and waste management, through biotechnology, IT and chemistry, to power and materials engineering.

Nine of them have been qualified for the next round, in which they will be assessed in terms of possible industrial application and economic viability. In addition, Grupa Azoty has decided to sign a letter of intent with ScienceBioTech, a start-up established by scientists from Wrocław universities, working on a technology to produce modular osteotomy plates. This new solution is expected to replace the currently used techniques for stabilising fractured bones.

"Today, the strength of a modern business lies in its openness to innovation and courage to make innovative ideas a reality. Grupa Azoty does have that courage, as demonstrated by the letter of intent signed today with ScienceBioTech under the Idea4Azoty programme. The intended partnership in work on a technology to produce osteotomy plates would open up prospects for Grupa Azoty to expand into new business areas, while truly contributing to the growth of innovation in Poland. I hope that the successful first months of our accelerator programme will encourage other innovators to enter their ideas, which may be brought to life in the future," says Wojciech Wardacki, President of the Management Board of Grupa Azoty S.A.

"Idea4Azoty gives firms like ours, coming from an academic background, an opportunity to get business interested in unique solutions and receive support in their commercialisation. Our mission is to help people recover faster, while preventing post-surgery pain and complications. We can do that with our innovative

modular osteosynthesis plates, which can be arranged into any shape best fitting the bone fracture. Thanks to *their use, the duration of a surgery may be shortened and patient recovery speeded up,"* says Małgorzata Cykowska-Błasiak, Vice President of ScienceBioTech.

Other projects submitted under the programme offered ideas for the Grupa Azoty Group's principal business in such areas as advanced materials, modern fertilizer products, as well as environmental technologies and solutions. The majority of the projects were created by small and medium-sized enterprises, followed by research institutes, start-ups, as well as individuals. The Wrocław and Kraków provinces took the lead in terms of the number of projects submitted.

The innovation accelerator programme has also stimulated the process of consolidating the Group's own R&D activities. Representatives of the Group companies based in Tarnów, Puławy, Kędzierzyn and Police now share information on their current research and planned joint projects. At present, they are working on a project developed from an idea submitted as part of Idea4Azoty to enable more effective use of urea-derived nitrogen during fertilizer application. This joint effort is being coordinated by the R&D function of Grupa Azoty Puławy.

"The attractiveness of solutions submitted under Idea4Azoty and their sheer number show that a programme like that has been much needed to offer space where the needs of business could meet the potential of science. I would like to encourage academic and research institutions, as well as innovators, operating individually or in consortia, to submit their projects irrespective of how advanced they are. It is really worth the effort, as co-financing for a single project may reach up to PLN 20m. Other forms of support include mentoring, infrastructure, legal advice and the possibility of implementing the most unique and innovative solutions fitting in with the Grupa Azoty Group's areas of interest," emphasises Grzegorz Kądzielawski, Vice President of the Management Board of Grupa Azoty, responsible for R&D.

Intake for the programme is continuous. To register, go to www.idea4azoty.pl.

The Grupa Azoty Group is the undisputed leader of the Polish fertilizer and chemical market and one of the key players in Europe. It is the second largest EU-based manufacturer of nitrogen and compound fertilizers, and its other products, including melamine, caprolactam, polyamide, oxo alcohols and titanium white, enjoy an equally strong standing in the chemical sector, with a wide range of applications in various industries. In May 2017, the Group unveiled its updated strategy until 2020. The key development areas cover completion of the Group's consolidation, reinforcing its leadership in agricultural solutions on the European market, strengthening the second operating pillar through expansion of the non-fertilizer business, as well as generating and implementing innovations to accelerate growth in the chemical sector. The Grupa Azoty Group is the integrator of Poland's chemical industry. By consolidating the plants in Tarnów, Puławy, Police and Kędzierzyn, it has ensured that the key chemical companies have remained in Polish hands, while creating a number of cost synergies. By 2017, the consolidation of strategic procurement, production, maintenance, logistics and IT generated savings estimated at no less than PLN 710m. The integration has brought multiple benefits to the Polish economy, the Group as a whole, and its individual plants.

ScienceBioTech is a young innovative firm focused on combining modern medicine with unconventional engineering methods. It is run by an interdisciplinary team of passionate people, experts in their respective, mutually complementary fields.

*) Osteotomy is a surgical operation to correct a fractured bone. Osteotomy plates are used to fix bones broken in an accident or intentionally during a surgical procedure. They stabilise the fractured area and bear the loads and mechanical stress until the bone heals.