

ON A MISSION TO BUILD LINKS IN THE USA

The Algal Bioenergy Special Interest Group (ABSIG) partnered with PHYCONET (a BBSRC NIBB) and the UK Science and Innovation Network to deliver a five-day Microalgae Mission to the USA aimed at building strategic partnerships.



RATIONALE:

Microalgae can be considered as single-celled chemical factories with enormous commercial potential.

In the UK, the microalgae R&D community is growing whilst in the USA a significant amount of investment has been made by the Department of Energy (DOE) through their Renewable Biomass Program. The DOE has invested in five national microalgae test-beds: facilities to enable industry and researchers to scale up their production or test their technology, led by ATP³ (atp3.org).

The UK Science and Innovation Network (UK SIN), Los Angeles, contacted the ABSIG to discuss how UK innovators could benefit from an opportunity to build links with ATP³. As a result, a Microalgae Mission Tour was planned to help UK microalgae experts make new contacts, discuss ideas and develop new projects with USA partners.

WHO TOOK PART:

AlgaeCytes Ltd; Algenuity Ltd;
Industrial Phycology Ltd;
Plymouth Marine Laboratory;
Rothamsted Research; SAMS;
Swansea University;
University College London (UCL);
Varicon Aqua Solutions Ltd;
Vitaplankton Ltd.



ON A MICROALGAE MISSION TO THE USA

Ten UK microalgae experts were selected to participate in the Mission through a competition organised by the ABSIG and PHYCONET on behalf of UK SIN.

The Microalgae Mission started in Phoenix at the Arizona Center for Algae Technology and Innovation (AzCATI), home to one of the DOE test-beds. Following a tour of the facilities, participants from the UK and AzCATI engaged in strategic discussions aimed at identifying synergies and opportunities for joint working.

To maximise opportunities, the UK participants then flew to San Diego and met with three key SMEs and four academic groups working on microalgae. All have benefited from DOE investment to drive the scale up and commercialisation of microalgae-based products.

The mission ended with a two-day symposium on "Food and Fuel for the 21st Century" at the University College of San Diego. This was a great opportunity to hear about US-based research and innovation and also to showcase the UK's microalgae research expertise, with presentations by Michele Stanley (SAMS & PHYCONET) and Saul Purton (UCL & PHYCONET).



KEY RESULTS FOR UK PARTICIPANTS:

184 new contacts made

37 sales of equipment

5 companies providing services/ resources to US partners

4 companies acquiring services/ resources from US partners

4 companies providing services or resources to UK partners

2 student exchanges with US partners

4 student exchanges with UK partners

8 collaborative projects with US partners

All **10** UK delegates involved in collaborative projects

2 licensing deals

Note: These are initial results and further outputs are anticipated.



Michael Yates - Algenuity Ltd

Definitely a productive and fruitful trip that will help to accelerate Algenuity forward.

Mike Allen - Plymouth Marine Laboratory

Brilliantly organised. A good range of people, companies and infrastructures viewed. I was really impressed with the openness and friendliness of our American counterparts.

Olga Sayanova - Rothamsted Research

I would like to thank the organisers for giving me the opportunity to visit state-of-the-art algal facilities in Arizona and San Diego and to meet leading scientists and business representatives to discuss future directions and possible collaborations in the field of algal biotechnology.

Brenda Parker - UCL

The tour was superbly well organised, and we had a busy itinerary which was great - every day was productive. The meeting with Synthetic Genomics and the trip to the testbeds were highlights for me.

Saul Purton - UCL

A very well organised tour - a full and productive schedule, and lots of useful contacts. All aspects were useful, but the industrial biotech and synthetic biology networking was particularly valuable to my research.

Joe McDonald - Varicon Aqua Solutions Ltd

I thought the Tour was a great success in particular consolidating a much more appreciative view of the key players in the UK. The interactions with our American counterparts was of the highest calibre, all credit to them for being so generous with their time and insight - I thought they really contributed greatly to the success of the tour. From the UK end, I thought the whole program was very well organised and I would like to give my sincerest thanks to all of those that made it happen and hope we have further opportunities in the future to participate further in such programs.



UK Science
& Innovation
Network



PHYCONET
high value products from microalgae
EBSRC EB SRC Networks in Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy (EB SRC NIB)



Innovate UK



The Algal Bioenergy Special Interest Group is managed by the Knowledge Transfer Network and funded by Innovate UK and NERC. The role of the ABSIG is to facilitate the development of a robust and sustainable algal industry in the UK.