

## Hovione to Buy Irish Pharma Ingredients Site from Pfizer

**H**ovione (Loures, Portugal) says it has agreed to buy Pfizer's multipurpose active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) plant at Loughbeg, Ireland. The deal is scheduled to be completed by early April 2009. Financial terms were not disclosed.

The site, to be renamed Hovione Cork, manufactures intermediates for APIs for Pfizer's cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor. Hovione, which has plants in Portugal and China, says it will continue to provide manufacturing services for Pfizer under the deal. Hovione Cork will employ 70-80 staff. Hovione plans to transfer products from its Loures site during the next two years, to Loughbeg where it will validate processes for new compounds in anticipation of drug approval.

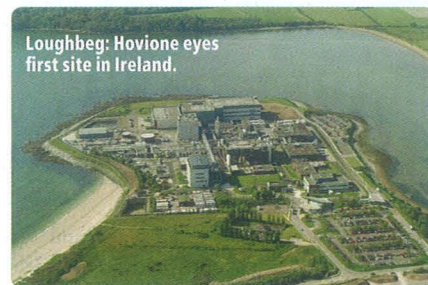
The plant increases Hovione's 810-cu-meter manufacturing capacity for APIs by 427 cu meters, and it can use specialized

chemistries including hydrogenation and low temperature chemistry, Hovione says. The plant will help to accommodate Hovione's growing pipeline of pharma products, the company says.

"We made clinical trial materials for over 40 drug candidates last year. We have been investing heavily in R&D for over six years and now have a strong development pipeline but have not invested in manufacturing assets since 2001, so it was time that we expanded our manufacturing capacity," Hovione says.

"This site offers everything that our customers might want—large-scale capacity, the highest standards, in a location where tax benefits are available to them, and a well-trained, innovative workforce," says Hovione's CFO Miguel Calado.

Hovione says it chose a site in Ireland because the location will help to better serve the company's API customers. The facility



Loughbeg: Hovione eyes first site in Ireland.

gives Hovione the ability to produce multiple small production campaigns and many of them simultaneously, the company says.

"The Cork site, the New Jersey Technology Transfer Centre, Loures in Portugal, and Taizhou and Macau in China now provide Hovione with the right range of capabilities in the correct geographies," CEO Guy Villax says. "Every site meets FDA requirements for APIs, but every site is suited to a different and well-defined mission," Villax says.

Pfizer has invested several-hundred-million dollars in plant and equipment at the site during the past 10 years, making it modern and well equipped to meet the highest standards in the industry, Hovione says. The site has had several since starting in 1984: Angus Fine Chemicals, Hickson & Welch, Warner Lambert, Pfizer, and Hovione. —ALEX SCOTT

### ■ Head of FDA to Step Down

Andrew von Eschenbach, U.S. FDA commissioner, says in an internal memo to his staff that he will resign from the organization on January 20, 2009, according to press reports. Eschenbach reportedly says he would work with president-elect Barack Obama's transition team "to ensure a seamless change in political leadership at the agency." A successor has yet to be named. Further senior managerial personnel changes are also expected to occur once Obama takes office.

### ■ Helsinn Gains Pharma License

Contract fine chemical and pharmaceutical producer Helsinn (Lugano, Switzerland) says the Irish Medicines Board, a regulatory body, has granted Helsinn's Birex Pharmaceuticals (Dublin) a license to manufacture investigational medicinal products. The license enables Helsinn to package, test, store, and release investigational products for use in clinical trials. "Having this authorization expands the range of development activities we can manage within the company and can offer as a service to our partners," says Giorgio Calderari, Helsinn's COO.

### COMPANIES

## Incoming SAFC President Cautiously Optimistic about 2009 Growth

**S**igma-Aldrich Fine Chemicals' (SAFC) incoming president Gilles Cottier tells *CW* that he is "cautiously optimistic" about the company's prospects during the next year, despite the challenging economic outlook. Cottier, currently president of Sigma-Aldrich's Research Essentials business, will replace Frank Wicks as president of SAFC on January 1, 2009.

"We have to be careful in our approach in the next year or two to come, but, absolutely, we are looking to continue to grow the business," Cottier says. "We are still looking for long-term [sales] growth of 10%/year," he says. "We still expect to see nice growth, [particularly] in Asia." Demand for SAFC's niche technologies, including high-potency active pharma ingredients (API), also remains strong, he adds.

The ongoing large-scale restructuring and cost-cutting initiatives taking place among

major pharma companies should present opportunities for SAFC to capture more business, Cottier says. To take advantage of such changes, SAFC will seek to enhance its customer responsiveness and, especially, to provide a higher level of customer service to its 10-largest customers, he says.

Cottier plans to continue the process of integrating recently acquired businesses into SAFC. He says he has ruled out any need for rationalization of manufacturing capacity or job reductions at this time. Instead, "we are being careful on our spending, and we are doing some good process improvements," he says.

Wicks will become president of Sigma-Aldrich's Research Specialties and Research Essentials on January 1. In his tenure as SAFC president, Wicks increased sales of the business unit by about \$200 million/year in 2003, to a projected \$700 million/year for 2008. —AS