

JAPAN ROUNDUP

The Central Pharmaceutical Affairs Council of Japan has authorized the first Japanese production of beta interferon—thought to control brain and skin cancer. Toray Industries will begin mass production of the drug this fall using cell culture.

Toyo Soda Manufacturing Co. (Tokyo) has established a joint company with DSM, a Dutch chemical company, to promote European marketing of its aspartame-containing low-calorie sweetener. Construction of a large-scale aspartame plant in Europe is scheduled for 1987. Its high yield, inexpensive production process was developed by the Sagami Chemical Research Center. It uses a mixture of D- and L-phenylalanine.

Yakult Honsha Co. (Tokyo) will scale up its fundamental biotechnology R&D capability, consolidating its five business fields—foods, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, biochemistry, and experimental research. It will also add new research interests such as pre-

vention of adult diseases, development of physiologically active substances, and genetic engineering technology.

Takara Shuzo (Kyoto) is expanding its biotech business in fermentation and restriction enzyme production. It will increase development of pharmaceuticals and diagnostic agents from physiologically active substances contained in metabolic products of microorganisms such as bacteria, yeasts, filamentous fungi, and basidiomycetes. Emphasis includes commercialization of 41 restriction enzymes and 18 modification enzymes, including reverse transcriptase.

Sumitomo Cement Co. (Osaka) will apply to the Health and Welfare Ministry for manufacturing approval of hydroxyapatite for use as artificial bone. Developed with the Medical and Engineering Department of The University of Tokyo, the new bone replacement is a multiporous sintered product instead of a ceramics and

apatite mixture. When implanted in bone marrow or bone tissue, it can induce production of new bone.

Konishi Co. (Osaka) has begun sales of a photosynthetic bacterial (PSB) product for use in fish breeding. The fish feed contains nutrients, methionine, vitamin B₁₂, and biotin.

With the cooperation of Japan's New Energy Development Organization (NEDO), The Fuel Alcohol Research Association has completed its test plant for alcohol production located at the site of NEDO'S Idemitsu alcohol factory. The plant will use a high-performance continuous alcohol fermentation process (flash fermentation process). The association plans to search out microbes that remain active even when temperature reaches 60°C. and alcohol concentration increases to 20 percent. It also hopes to reduce production costs by about 30 percent by developing an efficient alcohol production method using a variety of biomass as feed stock.

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