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SEQUENCING OF STEVIA PLANT GENOME REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY PURECIRCLE STEVIA INSTITUTE AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF NUTRITION

BUENOS AIRES, AR, Oct. 19, 2017 – For the first time, scientists have completed the sequencing of the stevia plant genome. Lead scientists from PureCircle Stevia Institute and KeyGene have unveiled this major breakthrough in research showing the annotated, high-quality genome sequences of three stevia cultivars.

This achievement provides a better understanding of key enzyme groups used by the stevia plant to produce the steviol glycosides giving stevia its characteristic sweet taste. To enable acceleration of the traditional breeding of the stevia plant, researchers identified several million potentially new markers in the assembled genomes.

PureCircle's non-GMO agriculture program is strengthened by these cutting-edge findings. The research helps facilitate optimization of the levels of the best-tasting steviol glycosides, including improvements in the levels of the well-known minor glycosides, Reb D and Reb M.

The data has been integrated into CropPedia, a comprehensive bioinformatics platform developed by KeyGene for visualization and analytics of all available genomic, transcriptomic and metabolomic stevia datasets. CropPedia enables chemists, biochemists, geneticists and agronomists to better understand the steviol glycoside biosynthesis pathways, and to rapidly create improved stevia varieties using traditional breeding practices.

Stevia is a plant-based, zero-calorie sweetener which has been approved by all major regulatory authorities globally for use in foods and beverages in over 150 countries.

Optimized stevia ingredients developed as a result of this research will enable deeper reductions in sugar and calorie content of foods and beverages, as well as superior tasting products. This greatly benefits consumers around the world by helping them meet dietary guidelines calling for reductions in sugar and calorie intake for improved health.

“PureCircle is committed to strengthening the understanding of the stevia leaf,” said Avetik Markosyan, Vice President, Head of Group Research and Development at PureCircle. “These findings provide strategic enhancements to our breeding and agronomy programs, as well as tremendous utility for scientists, farmers and developers working with stevia as a non-GMO ingredient.”

“Having a single high-quality reference genome is generally considered a major step forward for newly domesticated crops, such as stevia,” said Arjen van Tunen, CEO of KeyGene. “We have surpassed this benchmark with three independent reference genomes for stevia. This comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the stevia genome will directly translate to high–value, improved stevia varieties.”

“Being an industry leader, agronomic research is an investment PureCircle values highly,” said Faith Son, Vice President, Head of Marketing and Innovation at PureCircle. “This is indeed the stevia leaf’s next step towards creating a clearer path to great taste and understanding all of the immense benefits the plant contains for the global food and beverage industry as well as consumers.”

PureCircle Ltd. and The Coca-Cola Company co-funded this research.

About PureCircle Stevia Institute℠

Formerly the Global Stevia Institute, the PureCircle Stevia Institute’s℠ (PCSI) expanded mission is to advance research and share leading, balanced, science-based information that helps educate scientists, healthcare professionals and consumers on stevia’s benefits and the latest stevia science related to health and nutrition, agriculture, ingredient functionality and taste. PCSI is supported by PureCircle, Ltd., a global leader in purified stevia leaf extract ingredients. For more information, and to sign up to be part of the Stevia Community, visit www.purecirclesteviainstitute.com.

About KeyGene

KeyGene, the crop innovation company, is the go-to AgBiotech company for higher crop yield and quality. With intellectual capital, a solution driven approach and collaborative spirit, Keygene works for the future of global agriculture with partners in the AgriFood sector. Using their proprietary technologies and non-GM approaches, Keygene supports its customers with the development of new and improved crops. KeyGene’s goal is to help organizations with their toughest research and development challenges by combining cutting-edge breeding technologies, bioinformatics, data science expertise and plant-based trait platforms. www.keygene.com.

About the Coca-Cola Company

The Coca-Cola Company (NYSE: KO) is the world’s largest beverage company, offering over 500 brands to people in more than 200 countries. Of our 21 billion-dollar brands, 19 are available in lower- or no-sugar options to help people moderate their consumption of added sugar. In addition to our namesake Coca-Cola drinks, some of our leading brands around the world include: AdeS soy-based beverages, Ayataka green tea, Dasani waters, Del Valle juices and nectars, Fanta, Georgia coffee, Gold Peak teas and coffees, Honest Tea, Minute Maid juices, Powerade sports drinks, Simply juices, smartwater, Sprite, vitaminwater, and Zico coconut water. At Coca-Cola, we’re serious about making positive contributions to the world. That starts with reducing sugar in our drinks and continuing to introduce new ones with added benefits. It also means continuously working to reduce our environmental impact, creating rewarding careers for our associates and bringing economic opportunity wherever we operate. Together with our bottling partners, we employ more than 700,000 people

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