

### Over SEK 105m to research for sustainable development

**Mistra (the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research) has decided to invest in three research programmes to promote sustainable development and strengthen Swedish competitiveness. One is an ongoing programme that will be funded for another three years; the other two are new research programmes that are about to start. One project has also been awarded an ‘Idea Support Grant’.**

Mistra’s Board has reached its decisions following the review of applications carried out by international scientific evaluation groups. The applications were evaluated in terms both of scientific content and their contributions to sustainable development.

One of the new programmes for which Mistra has approved funding, the **Swedish Research Programme on Climate, Impacts and Adaptation**, seeks to create a new joint framework and model system for studies and feedback on, and between, the climate system and society. The whole chain, from socioeconomic development to land use and back to climatic effects, will be included. In its initial phase the Programme, which has been granted SEK 40 million, will last for four years.

‘Environmental problems are basically social problems,’ says Mistra’s Managing Director Ola Engelmark. ‘The initiatives approved by the Board today show the innovative strength that lies in researchers and practitioners agreeing both on descriptions of problems and on new ways of tackling them. The decisions also show that Mistra wants to invest in researchers and practitioners who venture to think in new, strategic ways to bring about sustainable social development.’

Another new programme that Mistra has decided to fund is **Mistra Pharma — Identification and Reduction of Environmental Risk caused by the Use of Human Pharmaceuticals**. This programme has been awarded SEK 44.2 million over a four-year period for study of the effects of pharmaceutical residues in the environment. One task to be addressed in the programme is to sort out which 30 of the total of 1,200 pharmaceutical substances used in Sweden today are potentially the most harmful to the environment. *Mistra Pharma* is also to study which methods can be used in wastewater treatment works to remove undesired pharmaceutical residues.

The Board also decided to award SEK 15 million for a concluding phase of a current programme, **Microbial Activity for a Sound Environment (MASE)**. The combination of Mistra’s investment and industrial companies’ inputs (which exceed Mistra’s) will enable MASE and industry jointly to develop one or more prototypes to demonstrate commercial opportunities for biological plant protection products. This programme has been in progress since 1996. Its purpose is to develop biological plant protection products in the form of naturally occurring microorganisms that can replacing chemical pesticides, which cause major environmental problems.

Besides the above-mentioned programmes, the Board also decided to support **BMAA and Cyanobacteria — an Environmental Threat to Human Health** by providing SEK 6 million in the form of ‘idea support’. To be awarded idea support, a project must be characterized by strong elements of boldness, originality and creativity, and it must entail some measure of risk-taking that is potentially of great value to the environment. This Idea Support Project is to investigate whether there is a connection between Cyanobacteria (formerly known as ‘blue-green algae’) and a number of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. The starting point for the project is the hypothesis that there is a connection, and that these bacteria are dispersed throughout the world. If the connection can be demonstrated, it may be hoped that remedies will also be found for a range of diseases that are incurable at present.

#### **Contact details for Mistra**

Anneli Hulthén, Chairperson of the Board of Mistra, City of Göteborg Executive Board, phone +46-31-61 25 37.

Ola Engelmark, Managing Director of Mistra, phone +46-8-791 10 24, +46-70-643 33 66.

Anna-Karin Engvall, Communications Manager of Mistra, phone +46-8-791 10 27, +46-707-32 30 07.

#### **Contact details for the research programmes**

*Swedish Research Programme on Climate, Impacts and Adaptation*

Mistra support awarded: SEK 40 million.

Programme Manager: Markku Rummukainen, Head of the Rossby Centre, phone +46-11-495 86 05, email: [Markku.Rummukainen@smhi.se](mailto:Markku.Rummukainen@smhi.se).

*Mistra Pharma*

Mistra support awarded: SEK 44.2 million.

Programme Manager: Christina Rudén, senior researcher, Division of Philosophy, Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), phone +46-8-790 95 78, email: [cr@infra.kth.se](mailto:cr@infra.kth.se).

*MASE — Microbial Activity for a Sound Environment*

Mistra support awarded: SEK 15 million.

Programme Manager: Christopher Folkesson Welch, MASE Laboratories, phone +46-18-67 48 58, mobile +46-709-32 26 96, email: [chris.welch@maselab.se](mailto:chris.welch@maselab.se).

#### **Idea Support Projects**

*BMAA and Cyanobacteria — an Environmental Threat to Human Health?*

Mistra support awarded: SEK 6 million.

Contact person: Birgitta Bergman, Professor of Plant Physiology, Stockholm University, phone +46-8-16 37 51, email: [Birgitta.Bergman@botan.su.se](mailto:Birgitta.Bergman@botan.su.se).

*For more information about current Mistra programmes and Idea Support Projects, see [www.mistra.org](http://www.mistra.org).*