

Developing the bioeconomy

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The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) established work on Biological Resource Centres (BRCs) in the late 1990's. BRCs are a key element of the scientific and technological infrastructure for the life sciences and biotechnology. A report on this initiative was published in 2001, *Biological Resource Centres – Underpinning the Future of Life Sciences and Biotechnology* (<http://oecdpublications.gfi-nb.com/cgi-bin/oecdbookshop.storefront>). This report argues the need for biological resource centres, strengthened and modified to meet the requirements of the 21st century, and recommended the creation of a Global Biological Resource Centre Network (GBRCN). A paper presented to Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy (CSTP) for ministers approval *Biotechnology for sustainable growth and development*, January 2004 describes the need for high-quality biological resource centres (BRCs). These are a vital element in a sustainable international scientific infrastructure, necessary to underpin successful delivery of the benefits of biotechnology. They are fundamental to the harnessing and preservation of the world's biodiversity and genetic resources. They are part of the key infrastructure supporting biotechnology, bioprocessing and the development of new approaches in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease. They also have a vital role in ensuring the safe, regulated use of organisms that are known pathogens to humans, plants or animals. Biological resources have been harnessed by man for thousands of years but the present day demands their improved utilisation, not only to replace the depletion of natural resources but to drive the economy, the bioeconomy. Bioeconomy refers to all economic activity derived from scientific and research activity focused on understanding mechanisms and processes at the genetic and molecular levels and its application to industrial process. BRCs can play a key role in the implementation of OECD Biotechnology programmes.