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Embracing Korea's life sciences industry as a powerhouse for next-generation innovation

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The demand for biopharmaceuticals in Korea and across APAC is growing rapidly, driven by aging populations, rising healthcare needs, and the shift toward personalized medicine. Cytiva's new Innovation Hub at the Korea's Songdo Bio-Cluster seeks to foster a collaborative environment where Korean and regional biopharma companies can flourish and bring therapies to patients more effectively. Upon completion in 2026, the Innovation Hub will Ã¢â?¬Ë?meet the evolving needs of the entire APAC region' explains Joonho Choi, General Manager Commercial, Cytiva Korea



South Korea has emerged as a major player in the global biopharmaceutical landscape, transforming from a generic drug manufacturer to a leading therapeutic developer with groundbreaking discoveries in cell and gene therapies (CGT) as well as biosimilars. With a market value of $22 billion, South Korea's biopharma industry ranks thirteenth globally by market share to emerge as a key hub for global biopharma over the past decade. Strategic, multisectoral investments in bioindustry infrastructure have played a significant role in driving this market expansion. In Korea's quest to become one of the world's six largest pharmaceutical powerhouses, government and business have played vital roles in nurturing the biopharmaceutical industry in the nation. Indeed, in 2023, the government released the 'Third Five-year Comprehensive Plan for Development and Support for the Bio-Pharmaceutical Industry' that complements Korea's estimated $2.9 billion investments each year. By 2027, the country plans to double pharmaceutical exports to $16 billion by implementing a comprehensive approach to ecosystem development.

Cytiva, a global biotechnology leader, recognises the opportunity to advance innovation in Korea and as part of this has initiated highly active programs in recent years, including both R&D initiatives and facility investments. In addition to its existing Fast Trak™ center, the global biopharma giant recently announced its first Innovation Hub at the Songdo Bio-Cluster in Incheon, South Korea. As a cornerstone for innovation and excellence, the new facility will serve as a resource to meet the changing needs of Cytiva's customers in Korea and across APAC. In an exclusive interaction with Biospectrum Asia,**Joonho Choi, General Manager Commercial, Cytiva Korea** outlined the company's pivotal role in the APAC biopharma industry thereby providing an in-depth overview of the APAC biopharmaceutical industry.

1. **What is your assessment of the APAC biopharma landscape in 2025?**

The APAC biopharma sector in 2025 is vibrant and advancing rapidly. Innovation is accelerating, fueled by increased investment, regulatory modernization, and a strong focus on advanced modalities like cell and gene therapies. Korea, Singapore, and Japan are leading with robust infrastructure and ecosystems, while India is emerging as a major player in the growing biosimilars market.

Regulatory bodies across the region have adopted more adaptive frameworks that support novel therapies while maintaining high safety standards. This has created a more agile environment for innovation and faster approvals, particularly in AI-assisted drug development and advanced biologics.

Manufacturing capabilities have also expanded significantly, especially in cell and gene therapy. Advances like automated bioprocessing and standardized vector platforms are making these therapies more accessible and commercially viable.

2. **How do you foresee Korea's role evolving in the wider APAC biopharma landscape?**

Korea is quickly becoming a cornerstone of APAC's biopharma future. With the growth of the Songdo Bio Cluster and strong government initiatives like the Bio Economy 2.0 strategy and the proposed CDMO Support Act, Korea is expanding its manufacturing capacity while shaping regional policy and innovation.

What distinguishes Korea is its ability to align infrastructure, talent, and regulatory foresight into a unified growth engine. As global investment and collaboration increase, Korea is solidifying its position as both a production powerhouse and a hub for next-generation therapies.

Korea is also advancing global health equity by serving as a bio-vaccine training hub for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Through the Global Training Hub for Biomanufacturing (GTH-B)—a partnership with the WHO and the Ministry of Health and Welfare—Korea is helping close the vaccine access gap while attracting and developing biomanufacturing talent.

3. **How will Cytiva's Korea facility play a pivotal role in the APAC biopharmaceutical market, and what role can Cytiva play in fostering innovation and excellence across the region and beyond?**

Our Innovation Hub in Songdo is strategically designed to meet the evolving needs of the entire APAC region. By localizing the production of critical filtration products and creating a space where customers can experience our technologies firsthand, the hub enables us to collaborate more closely with them—helping them scale faster and more efficiently.

Our existing Fast Trak™ center in Songdo already supports the broader APAC market by offering process development services, training, and consultation to customers in countries like Japan and Australia.

Building on this ongoing contribution and capability in the region, the new hub will serve as a bridge between global expertise and local ambition, fostering a collaborative environment where Korean and regional biopharma companies can thrive and bring therapies to patients more effectively.

4. **How does Cytiva's Innovation Hub contribute to positioning Songdo as a global bio hub? What updates can you share at this stage, and how is it progressing toward the 2026 completion goal?**

Songdo is already recognized as a rising global bio hub, and Cytiva's Innovation Hub is poised to accelerate that momentum. The facility will enhance the existing ecosystem by offering localized manufacturing while creating synergy with the existing Fast Trak™ center, which provides hands-on training and technical support.

With its strategic location, the hub is well-positioned to strengthen the bio-cluster's presence across Asia, alongside leading companies and institutions such as Samsung Biologics, Celltrion, SK Bioscience, Lotte Biologics, and K-NIBRT.

Construction is progressing steadily toward our 2026 completion goal. We are actively engaging with local stakeholders to ensure the hub both aligns with, and enhances, Korea's broader biopharma strategy. Once operational, it will not only further

elevate Songdo's global competitiveness but also serve as a model for integrated, innovation-driven biomanufacturing.

5. **How does the new Korea facility stand out among other facilities, and what is its competitive edge in this evolving market and current trade uncertainties?**

What makes our Korea facility unique is its holistic, integrated design. It's not just a manufacturing site—it's a center for collaboration, training, and innovation. Its proximity to customers allows us to respond quickly to evolving needs, navigate complex regulatory environments, and reduce exposure to global trade disruptions. In today's uncertain geopolitical climate, our localized model ensures continuity, speed, and trust. This is a competitive edge that enables us to deliver increased value, going beyond products alone to encourage partnerships which will help to build resilience for the sector.

The new facility also supports Cytiva's sustainability ambitions. In line with our 2025 and 2030 sustainability goals, Cytiva is committed to achieving Net-Zero environmental impact for all new construction and renovation projects. For the new Innovation Hub in Korea, we are integrating sustainable practices throughout the facility, including installing rooftop solar panels, upgrading to high-efficiency HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning) systems, enhancing building insulation, and rigorously testing all manufacturing wastewater, all of which will help us to meet our stringent environmental standards.

6. **How does the facility contribute to advancing the local bio industry, especially in training future bio professionals?**

A building is just one part of the story, what happens inside it is down to the people who make it possible. At Cytiva we are committed to developing talent that will enhance the global biotechnology industry. Through our Fast Trak™ services and partnerships with institutions like K-NIBRT at Yonsei University, we're helping to equip the next generation of bioprocessing professionals with the skills they need to succeed. Since 2016, our Fast Trak™ center in Korea has trained thousands of professionals, and the new Innovation Hub will significantly expand that impact.

This is especially important given that only 24% of APAC biopharma executives—according to Cytiva's 2023 Global Biopharma Resilience Index—feel confident in accessing GMP-ready talent. We're committed to closing that gap and supporting Korea's leadership in biomanufacturing excellence.

7. **How does this Innovation Hub enhance stakeholder relationships and collaboration, as well as strengthen Korea's domestic life science industry through high-quality filtration products?**

The Innovation Hub is designed to bring stakeholders closer—both physically and strategically. It will enable customers to test technologies in real-world scenarios, co-develop solutions, and receive hands-on support from our experts. By manufacturing high-quality filtration products locally, we're also reinforcing Korea's domestic supply chain and reducing reliance on imports.

This not only improves operational agility but also strengthens trust and collaboration across the ecosystem, empowering Korea's life sciences industry to grow with confidence and resilience.

8. **In the APAC biopharma arena, how do you envision the Korea facility meeting the soaring demand and market dynamics? In light of future challenges and opportunities, how does Cytiva position itself?**

The demand for biopharmaceuticals in Korea and across APAC is growing rapidly, driven by aging populations, rising healthcare needs, and the shift toward personalized medicine. Our Korea facility is strategically positioned to meet this demand by offering localized, high-quality solutions with faster turnaround times.

The challenge lies in staying ahead of evolving technologies and regulatory landscapes—but that's also where the opportunity lies. With our global expertise, regional footprint, and deep local partnerships, Cytiva is uniquely positioned to help customers navigate complexity, scale efficiently, and deliver life-changing therapies to patients across the region.

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