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University of Louvain and Wageningen University launch their new spin-off A-Mansia: a microbiome company

A-Mansia is the latest co-spin-off from the University of Louvain (UCL) and Wageningen University. It aims to develop **Akkermansia**-based products. Three years from now, a first nutritional supplement will become available, based on a gut bacterium called *Akkermansia*, discovered in 2004 by Prof. Willem M. de Vos (Wageningen University) and whose health effects were revealed by Prof. Patrice Cani and his team at University of Louvain (UCL). Patrice Cani says “the spin-off is a unique opportunity to make the scientific discoveries made in UCL’s laboratory available to everyone”. Willem de Vos goes the same way « it is fantastic to see our discoveries of the last decade being translated into innovations that can reach the market place soon. » Led by Jean-Christophe Malrieu, A-Mansia is starting up strong with **€13 million** raised within a single year. The funds will be used to progress in two different directions: the development of a proprietary nutritional supplement based on *A. muciniphila* through to commercial launch and the construction of a pharma research pipeline based on active component isolated from *A. muciniphila*. This progress was also made possible by three years’ worth of support by the Walloon Region through a ‘FIRST Spin-off’ (DG06) project.

The research behind this new spin-off from University of Louvain (UCL) and Wageningen University is rooted in the **2008** with the **discovery** of the ***Akkermansia muciniphila*** bacterium’s beneficial effects by Patrice Cani, WELBIO Researcher at the UCL Louvain Drug Research Institute, and his team in close collaboration with Prof. Willem de Vos of Wageningen University. Both teams proved that the demonstration that daily administration of live *Akkermansia muciniphila* is able to prevent the development of metabolic disorders and inflammatory condition in mice fed with a high-fat diet.

Better still, in a preclinical model, pasteurized *Akkermansia muciniphila* (heat-treated bacteria) exhibited the same, or even greater, beneficial effects and completely prevents the development of disorders induced by a high fat diet in a preclinical model. A first human exploratory study in volunteers were conducted in Brussels at UCL’s Saint-Luc University Hospital between 2015 and February 2018. Some intermediates results already confirmed that the bacterium is well tolerated. In parallel research, in 2015, the teams identified active components isolated from *A. muciniphila* that is able to replicate the beneficial properties associated with the administration of the whole bacterium.

A-Mansia is the first co-spin-off of joint research led by two European universities, University of Louvain (UCL) and Wageningen University. **It’s also the first spin-off in the field of nutrition and intestinal microbiota:**

- **Its objective? Develop products** based on the *Akkermansia* bacterium
- **Why this bacterium?** *Akkermansia* is naturally present in human gut, in various quantities depending on the individual. Tests demonstrated that certain situations provoke an *Akkermansia* deficit. Thus the goal is to **restore the bacterium in the gut and spur dialogue** with other bacteria in order to support our body’s normal function. Products could be a support to maintain good health and notably immunity, normal glycemia, normal cholesterol levels and intestinal function. A-Mansia’s **uniqueness?** The development of **two routes** (, one in the field of **nutrition** (*Akkermansia* bacterium), the other in **pharmacology** (active component isolated from the bacterium). It’s **unprecedented** for a spin-off to start up right from the get-go in pursuit of two promising prospects.
- A-Mansia’s **first Akkermansia-based nutritional supplement is foreseen** to be on the market within three years, by **2021**.



The co-spin-off's **funding** is impressive: **€13 million** has been raised in **one year**. The lead investor is the **French investment fund Seventure Partners**, which **specialises in the microbiome field**. Fonds Vives II (University of Louvain), SRIW and Nivelinvest. A-Mansia will **create 15 direct jobs** by 2020, in addition to any indirect jobs. The spin-off's headquarters will be based in Belgium and R&D activities will be conducted in part in University of Louvain (UCL) and Wageningen University laboratories.

Some figures. More than **1 in 3 Belgians**, or more than **35 %**, are overweight and **15%** are obese (almost **1 in 5**). Worldwide in 2014, **1.9 billion** people were overweight and **600 million** were obese.

UCL has created **76 spin-offs** since 1972, of which **65** are still active. UCL comprises **30,760** students and is responsible for **1 Nobel Prize**, **€231 million** for research, **258** PhD theses in 2016 (**1** thesis defended per day), **2** science parks and **4** business incubators, **365** companies and **7,106** jobs. UCL's Fonds Vives II is capitalised at **€43 million**, the largest European investment fund by amount ever initiated by a university.

Wageningen University & Research celebrate in 2018 its **100** years. Wageningen University, it is **6,500** staff members and **12,000** students. Its moto? To explore the potential of nature to improve the quality of life.

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