

Regulation & Law

Hazardous Substances

U.S., Argentina Sign Agreement To Boost Nanotechnology Cooperation

BUENOS AIRES--The United States and Argentina July 9 agreed to boost bilateral cooperation on nanotechnology in a deal that the South American country hopes will help it gain proficiency in launching nanoprodukt business projects.


"The United States and Argentina have a shared interest in the development of nanoscale science and technology," a joint statement signed by visiting Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon and Argentina's Minister of Science, Technology, and Productive Innovation Lino Baranao said.

"Both countries have existing scientific programs and are committed to seeing the emergence of safe products and sound policies to ensure societal benefit," according to the statement released by the American Embassy in Buenos Aires.

The two countries identified standards, metrology, environment, health and safety research, clean water, clean energy, and disease detection and treatment as nanotechnology areas where they want to boost cooperation.

Argentina Eyes OECD Nanotech Panels

The also said they will promote the exchange and training of experts, information and documents, and the joint use of research and development facilities to conduct scientific investigation.

As part of the deal, the United States will seek to help Argentina increase its participation in international forums, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which has two working panels on nanotechnology (108 DER A-13, 6/5/08 .

Argentina is not a member of the 30-nation group where member governments compare practices and seek to coordinate policies on a wide array of economic, environmental, scientific, and social issues.

"These kinds of deals are crucial for Argentina," said Roberto Fernandez Prini, who chairs Argentina's Nanotechnology Foundation, an independent government agency that started operations in 2006 with a mandate to promote new business ventures in the field.


From Academia to Market

Fernandez Prini told BNA in an interview July 17 that Argentina is making its initial strides and still has a lot to learn about how to take academic and scientific advances and turn them into viable business projects that can elicit both domestic and foreign market interest.

"To see how others do it can help us a lot--How are contracts made? How do they handle the royalties issue? How do they manage patents? We have noticed that there are small, successful nanotechnology enterprises in the United States and the European Union" that could serve as a model for local startups, the official added.

The foundation has already approved five projects in the areas of environment, space and satellite technology, medicine, veterinary medicine, and microelectronics and three more are under consideration. Fernandez Prini declined to provide details, citing confidentiality agreements.

But he said two of the projects involve private enterprises and that they comprise both nanoscale materials and services, including sensors for spacecraft and water- and soil-quality monitoring procedures.

The foundation has an initial \$10 million budget and is already looking for extra funding to expand its field of action, Fernandez Prini said. He added that Baranao is a former member of the foundation and takes a keen interest in developing nano science, technology, and products in Argentina. 

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