THE SELF HEALING BODY
BioArk bridges industries with innovation

The canton of Valais, accounting for one in four life sciences jobs in Western Switzerland, has big plans for growth in the sector, and BioArk is playing a major role.

BY JACQUELINE PRIM, PROJECT MANAGER, AND MASSIMO NOBILE, SITE MANAGER AT BIOARK

Diversifying and driving the regional economy through new high added-value activities with strategically aligned innovation projects is the mission The Ark Foundation received from the canton of Valais authorities in 2004. In addition to day-to-day support of innovation projects, The Ark invested in building a holistic approach, strengthening and combining the best from companies, academia, and government to create a truly regional innovation system. One building block of this system includes dedicated technology parks in the areas of digital sciences and services, energy and environment and life sciences. Spread across different sites in Valais, they form an economic development backbone for the region. Three of these sites, BioArk in Monthey and Visp, and PhytoArk in Conthey, are dedicated to life sciences activities.

BioArk... a dedicated life sciences technology park

The BioArk Technology Park bridges the two industrial sites of Monthey and Visp, combining training, technology and entrepreneurship to nurture and grow innovation. A new four-storey, 4,000 m2 building was opened 2016 in Visp, increasing BioArk’s infrastructure to 10,500 m2. By 2020, this will more than double with additional buildings in Visp and Monthey.

BioArk Visp is ideally located next to a biotech-pharma industrial site and train station. It hosts a school of chemistry and biology laboratory assistants, offers flexible office and laboratory space for start-ups and SMEs, and added-value services like fill and finish. Swissfillon (see below), a successful public-private partnership, operates the cutting-edge fill and finish facility.

The first two start-ups to join BioArk Visp are Medirio and Curio Biotech (see p.49). BioArk supports the development of new innovative projects bringing together the best of industry and academia. The demand for a skilled and trained workforce in the biotech-pharma sector is increasing— together with industry, professional education and academia. BioArk will answer this need with a dedicated training platform located in the new Visp building opening 2020.

Life sciences in Valais

The life sciences sector in the canton of Valais represents about an eighth of the canton’s GDP and provides more than 6,000 jobs. One in four life sciences jobs in Western Switzerland are in Valais. These figures will strongly increase with large investments such as the Ibex biomanufacturing complex from Lonza that will start operations in 2020 (see p.49). There is also a broad range of smaller biotech-pharma companies and industries doing very well as fresh young talents create start-ups. Today, Valais offers the full value chain with innovative platforms boosting biopharma product development.
The agile advantage of Ibex from Lonza

Ibex from Lonza is an innovative new concept aimed at biopharma customers looking for ultimate flexibility as they address their next development and manufacturing challenge. Comprising a group of modular, technology-agnostic development and manufacturing complexes, Ibex solutions give customers complete freedom in facility design and implementation, and the ability to respond rapidly as their needs evolve. These companies can also exploit a significant time-to-market advantage by using the Ibex pre-built option, which is further accelerated thanks to the integration of Ibex into Lonza’s state-of-the-art site in Visp, Switzerland. Ibex solutions are also available with highly flexible business and ownership models, to match and adapt to each customer’s expectations and forecasts.

BY TORSTEN SCHMIDT, SENIOR DIRECTOR, HEAD OF IBEX OPERATIONS, LONZA

Swissfillon, the Swiss fill and finisher

Swissfillon is a very agile aseptic fill and finish service provider to pharmaceutical and biotech companies ensuring highest quality, highest security, fully cGMP compliant CMO services for high value, complex, difficult to fill products. With the innovative, fully automated and highly flexible filling line, we provide manufacturing capacity for vials, syringes and cartridges from 11 to 1001 batch size, when the product is too complex for small (manual) fill and finishers and when the big fill and finishers are fully booked for large quantities. Together with our partners, we are your ideal CMO partner for all fill and finish related aspects from clinical phase I to early commercial supply.

• Primary packaging development: container, glass and rubber specification, including state-of-the-art product-specific primary packaging validation
• Compounding
• Fully automated liquid aseptic filling in isolator technology
• Visual Inspection
• Full QC services from income testing of raw materials to drug product release together with our QC partner Solvas/Confarma

BY DANIEL KEHL, FOUNDER AND CEO, SWISSFILLON