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## **Scion licenses a revolutionary wood plastic reinforcer**

An exciting new technology that produces wood plastic pellets has been developed by Crown Research Institute Scion with the potential to revolutionise the composition of plastics worldwide.

Scion has negotiated a licensing agreement with Sonae Indústria Group for the manufacture and sale of the wood plastic pellet technology. The licence gives the Sonae Indústria Group an exclusive licence to commercialise the technology in Europe.

“Our company has been interested in this technology for a few years, and our successful trials with plastic processing operations have given us the confidence to introduce this new material to Europe,” says Christophe Chambonnet (CMSO – Chief Marketing & Sales Officer), Sonae Indústria.

Scion developed and patented this technology under its biofibre research programme funded by New Zealand’s former Foundation of Research Science and Technology (now Ministry of Science and Innovation).

“We recognised the growth in commercial application of natural fibre reinforced plastics and saw an opportunity for wood fibres, which have been very difficult to process with plastics”, says Jeremy Warnes, Science Leader at Scion.

“Agricultural fibres such as hemp, flax, and sisal are used as reinforcing fibres but have disadvantages such as seasonality in supply, variable quality, and specialist processing equipment is needed to convert the fibres into a form that can be processed by plastics manufacturers.”

The technology enables production of wood plastic composites with long wood fibre reinforcement, which are easily fed into conventional extruders and injection moulders and processed as biobased fibre reinforced plastics.

“As one of the world leaders in wood technology, with over 10 million tons of wood processed annually, Sonae Indústria needs to have an important role in the future of the wood sector. I have no doubt that we are creating a new future by mixing wood fibres with thermoplastic polymers and a new perspective on the use of the wood fibre”, adds Christophe Chambonnet.

The main advantage of these new wood plastic pellets is the strength they give to traditional polymers. So much so, that Sonae Indústria has named the technology’s product “WoodForce”.

“In addition to the high performance of this product, what’s also exciting is the fact that the technology can easily fit into existing manufacturing and processing chains. The wood fibre rich dice will be sold to wood plastic composite manufacturers and compounders”, says Scion’s Chief Executive Warren Parker.

Applications for the natural fibre reinforcement technology are wide-ranging and could include decking, fencing, pallets, furniture, automotive parts, appliance housings, computer peripherals and many common applications for plastics and fibreglass products.

While the first commercial applications of the technology are likely to appear in Europe, the intellectual property is retained in New Zealand with Scion having filed international patent applications for the technology.

“The licence deal is likely to return royalties exceeding \$10 million over the next decade, if Sonae Indústria and the technology are successful in the market”, says Dr. Parker, “and that’s just the start, with the rapidly expanding global market for natural fibre plastic composites.”

In addition to the licensing deal for Europe, Sonae Indústria has the right to negotiate with Scion for other regions except for Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Korea.

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*Photos available on request from Scion.*

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#### **About Scion**

Scion is a Crown Research Institute that undertakes research, science and technology development in forestry, wood products, biomaterials and bioenergy. Scion's work contributes to beneficial economic, environmental and social outcomes for New Zealand. Formerly the NZ Forest Research Institute, Scion employs approximately 340 people and has its head office in Rotorua. For more information, please visit [www.scionresearch.com](http://www.scionresearch.com)

#### **About Sonae Industria**

Sonae Indústria, SGPS, SA is one of the largest wood-based panels producer in the world processing over 7 million tonnes annually. It employs around 5500 people on 27 production sites in seven countries and has sales locations in Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Canada, Netherlands and South Africa. For more information, please visit [www.sonaeindustria.com](http://www.sonaeindustria.com)