

AgBiome and Percival Scientific Partner for a Better World



CASE STUDY

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THE STARTUP

“I’ve just had a very positive experience,” reflected Dr. Philip Hammer of his interactions with Percival Scientific. When it came time to acquire Incubators and Plant Growth Chambers for his third startup company, experience had taught Hammer there was really only one way to go; Percival Scientific. Hammer is Research Director for AgBiome, a biotechnology company, residing in the Research Triangle of North Carolina, using new knowledge of the plant-associated microbiome to create innovative products for agriculture. “We were founded in 2012 by a group of people who have been working in agriculture and ag biotech for 20 years. We wanted to be an early stage discovery engine for agriculture,” Hammer recalls.

This now three-year-old ag innovation company isolates, analyzes and tests microbes for use in agriculture as a means to discover and develop innovative biological products for crop protection. Their proprietary Genesis™ discovery platform comprises the world’s largest, most diverse, fully-sequenced collection of microbes, coupled to industry-best screens for insect, disease and nematode control. AgBiome believes better microbes make better crops, which make a better world.

THE NEED

AgBiome is working to discover both biological products and traits which can be used to combat important problems in agriculture, including plant disease, weeds, insects and nematodes. Thus, they present a diverse array of needs as it relates to controlled environments. They require incubators to grow plantlets for plant tissue cultures, plant growth chambers for whole plant testing, specialized dew chambers to induce dew on plant leaves for the study of disease, and insect incubators used to rear insect colonies on which to test microbes.

ENTER PERCIVAL SCIENTIFIC

Hammer, during the course of his career had worked with a number of chamber manufactures. As an Iowa native, he was familiar with the Percival Scientific brand, but had not worked with their product until about 10 years before the founding of AgBiome when at a previous company he acquired some used lighted incubators. Being the third owner of incubators that had been in service for years and had experienced multiple moves, Hammer and his then colleagues were impressed by the equipment’s durability. “They just worked, they had been used for many years, put on trucks and bumped around and we plugged them in and they just worked,” he recalled, adding that they kept on working.

In fact, when he needed to modify some of them, a call to Percival revealed that they still had the blueprints for those devices and could fabricate his modification and ship it to him for local installation on machines more than 10 years old.

Needless to say, with that experience in the rearview mirror, Percival Scientific earned consideration as Hammer and new colleagues came together to form a new company. “When we founded AgBiome, I looked around, but in terms of value, price point and availability they simply could not be beat,” he explains of the decision to purchase the original chambers for the young company, then still housed in its original location as a prelude to the construction of a new 30,000 square foot facility at The Lab in Research Triangle Park.

THE SOLUTION

Agbiome counts the following Percival Scientific products among its inventory, Controlled Temperature and Humidity Walk-In (CTH-1010), Reach-In Plant Growth (PGC-15) and (E-36L2), Dew Formation Chambers (I-35D), multiple Plant Tissue Culture Chambers (CU-36L5) and Incubators (I-36VL).

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THE VALUE ADD

Price point and reliability however were not the only value AgBiome and Hammer found in Percival Scientific built equipment.

MOBILITY

“I knew that we were going to be moving, one of the nice things about these units is that they are very mobile, they are on wheels, and fit through standard doorways. When the time came, moving them to the new facility, often one of the most difficult aspects of a laboratory move, was literally just an afternoon job,” he relates. Plug and play in every regard.

CUSTOM DESIGN

In planning the new laboratory AgBiome wanted a custom designed 100 square foot insectary. The competitive bid process once again led Hammer to Perry Iowa. They provided the best value, while meeting the precise, albeit somewhat unusual, specifications AgBiome presented. “They worked with us to deliver that in an economical fashion and to easily integrate it into the building, making it that much simpler for our local contractor,” said Hammer of a value many find in working with the people at Percival.

THE TEAM

And speaking of working with the people at Percival. The sales team, the engineers and the production people are not only all in one building, they are all on one page. “When I talk to the sales team I know that communication of my needs is flowing smoothly through their organization. There is not a lot of bureaucracy in which the message

can get distorted,” describes Hammer relating both his experiences and his observation when he visited the facility.

The focus Hammer notes is no accident. By keeping all aspects of the operation under one roof Percival maintains complete control of the manufacturing process assuring customers the highest quality product possible. The communication Hammer describes is a core value of Percival.

THE RESULTS

Percival Scientific is proud to partner with such cutting edge companies as AgBiome and researchers like Dr. Hammer, and is pleased that they can make a contribution to such a lofty company goal as to make a better world.

Although themselves a company steeped in more than 125 years of tradition, Percival recognizes the exploding growth of startups coming to the vertical markets they serve and wants to foster the entrepreneurial ecosystem by working closely to meet the specific needs of the emerging market.

Three years from founding, AgBiome continues to grow, successfully closing a Series A and Series B funding round, the latter led by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and already contemplating expansion into a larger space. Their first product, a biological fungicide, is now undergoing regulatory review prior to going to market in the near future.

As this young company of scientific entrepreneurs continues to grow, Percival Scientific stands ready to supply them with the means to further their important research.

For more information on Percival Scientific plant tissue culture chambers or any other chamber and incubators, please visit www.percival-scientific.com; call 1.800.695.2743 or email, info@percival-scientific.com