Oxitec Announces Landmark Approval of Florida Keys Pilot Project to Combat Mosquito that Transmits Dengue, Zika

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• Agreement follows approval from nine government agencies including the U.S. EPA and State of Florida agencies

• U.S. CDC and University of Florida to provide independent project evaluation

• Independent Advisory Board formed to include inputs and guidance from diverse stakeholders

• FKMCD, Oxitec to launch new public educational webinar series

Oxford, UK and Washington, DC: Oxitec, a U.S.-owned, U.K.-based company providing targeted biological insect control solutions, announces the final approval of an agreement to carry out a demonstration project of Oxitec's safe, non-biting *Aedes aegypti* just-add-water technology in the Florida Keys. Approved by the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District (FKMCD) Board of Commissioners on Tuesday, the pilot project comes more than 10 years after FKMCD first invited Oxitec to pilot its technology in the Keys due to the growing challenges controlling this disease vector. More information on the project can be found here.

The FKMCD's approval comes after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and seven government agencies in Florida approved an Experimental Use Permit (EUP), following an exhaustive regulatory assessment that included more than 70 scientific and technical documents, 4,500 pages of material, and 25 commissioned scientific studies. All found that Oxitec's technology poses no risk to humans, animals or the environment, including endangered species. The U.S. EPA also opened a public comment period after which it provided direct, technical answers to each substantive question submitted. Those technical responses can be found here.

The female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is an invasive species found throughout the world and spreads dengue, Zika, chikungunya and yellow fever. It poses an increasing threat. This year there have been localized outbreaks of dengue in the Keys.

The FKMCD-Oxitec collaboration will be overseen by FKMCD. In addition, independent evaluation will be carried out by the U.S. CDC and the University of Florida's Medical Entomology Laboratory. The project will include valuable inputs from an Independent Advisory Board representing a diverse base of stakeholders which will ensure a range of viewpoints are represented during the project.

FKMCD and Oxitec will continue public engagement efforts while initiating technical planning for the project, which will include decisions on timing and locations. Building on ten years of extensive public engagement and education, FKMCD and Oxitec will launch additional engagement efforts with the local community and other interested parties as the project progresses.

Grey Frandsen, CEO of Oxitec, said: "Our team is incredibly thankful to the FKMCD commissioners, regulators and our diverse partners for placing trust in us. We're ready to get to work, and we couldn't think of better partners than the FKMCD's professional staff and collaborators in this project. We're looking forward to working hand-in-hand with the Keys community to demonstrate the effectiveness of our safe, sustainable technology in light of the growing challenges controlling this disease-spreading mosquito."

About Oxitec's *Aedes aegypti* technology:

Oxitec's non-biting male mosquito was designed to control the invasive, disease spreading *Aedes aegypti*. It has successfully provided significant suppression of the wild *Aedes aegypti* in Brazil and does not persist in the environment or cause harm to beneficial insects.

This technology also removes all requirements for adult mosquito-rearing and releases, and eliminates the potential for female releases. Combined with other innovations, this technology is anticipated to reduce up to 90% of costs associated with traditional insect release programs.

Recent similar demonstration projects in the Brazilian city of Indaiatuba found that Oxitec's mosquito

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suppressed disease-carrying *Aedes aegypti* by up to 95%[1]
in urban, dengue-prone environments following just 13 weeks of treatment, as compared to untreated control sites in the same city.

Additional resources:

- The U.S. EPA's approval of and complete risk assessment of the pilot project;
- The U.S. EPA's responses to public comments;
- The U.S. EPA/U.S. CDC memorandum on vectorial capacity of Oxitec's technology;
- The U.S. CDC's letter confirming their role as independent evaluator of the project;
- The State of Florida's approval of the pilot project;
- 100+ independent peer-reviewed scientific publications on Oxitec technology;
- Oxitec's announcement of OX5034 just-add-water technology pilot results in Brazil;
- Oxitec's resource hub for all things Oxitec and the Florida Keys.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates there are 390 million dengue infections per year, with approximately half of the world's population at risk. The number of dengue cases reported to the WHO has increased more than 15-fold during the past two decades.

[1] *95% was the high 2-week rolling average and the individual weekly high was 98%; the highest 4-week rolling average was 92%.*

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