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NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Date: 01.03.2012
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Major Food Research Center Chooses ProtoCOL Colony Counter
To Help Increase Throughput of Crucial Research on Food Pathogens

Frederick, MD: Synbiosis, a world-leading manufacturer of automated micro-biological systems, is pleased to announce its innovative ProtoCOL automated colony counting system is being used at the Robert Mondavi Research Institute, a major US food and wine research center, to speed up studies on the growth of a variety of bacterial pathogens in food.

Microbiologists in the Robert Mondavi Research Institute (RMI) at the University of California, Davis are using ProtoCOL to look for, and count colonies of bacteria associated with food poisoning on a wide range of media and plate types. These pathogens include *E.coli 0157* and *Salmonella* growing in nuts and fresh produce. Using a ProtoCOL, researchers at the RMI are able to rapidly and accurately monitor how pathogens can grow in different types of storage conditions. It is hoped this information will lead to a greater understanding of how to prevent outbreaks of food poisoning associated with these bacterial pathogens.

Dr Anne-Laure Moyne, Staff Research Associate at the RMI explained: “We run trials looking at how storing products such as almonds, pistachios and lettuce can affect the growth of bacterial contaminants. During these trials, we can generate around 250 spiral, pour plates or gridded filters on plates every day, all of which have to be analyzed. Doing this manually with a light box and pen meant our staff had to work very long days, so we knew we had to automate the process.”

Dr Moyne added: “We tested two automated colony counters side by side but found that because of the different lighting methods only the ProtoCOL could recognize and count black *Salmonella* colonies when the BSA (bismuth sulphite agar) media they are growing on is green. We also saw the ProtoCOL could count red colonies on red media and distinguish between grid lines and colonies more

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accurately. This is why we decided the ProtoCOL system was the right one for our research and we have been very happy with the system's performance."

Martin Smith of Synbiosis stated: "With recent outbreaks of food poisoning in Europe associated with salad products, research into what triggers bacterial growth is critical. We're proud to hear the ProtoCOL is being used by microbiologists at such a prestigious food research institute to help improve the productivity of their important trials. The results RMI microbiologists are seeing, especially using chromogenic media, shows scientists in food microbiology laboratories looking for a versatile, accurate automated colony counter that a ProtoCOL is an intelligent choice."

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Note to Editors
About Synbiosis

Synbiosis is a world-leading supplier of integrated imaging solutions for automatic counting and analysis of microbial colonies and zone measurement. The ProtoCOL and åCOLyte systems from Synbiosis are installed in food, pharmaceutical, environmental and research microbiology laboratories world-wide. Synbiosis uses established distribution channels to market its products internationally.

Synbiosis, founded in 1998 is a division of the Synoptics Group based in Cambridge UK. The Group's other divisions, Syncroscopy and Syngene, specialize in digital imaging solutions for microscopy and molecular biology applications respectively. Synoptics currently employs 40 people in its UK and US subsidiary operation.

About the Robert Mondavi Institute

In 2001, Robert Mondavi, renowned California wine producer, made a personal gift of $25 million to establish the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science (RMI) within the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at University of California, Davis.

The RMI houses two departments -- Viticulture and Enology, and Food Science and Technology -- under one roof in a new, state-of-the-art facility. These departments, recognized as the best in the world in their respective areas of scholarship, are linked with other disciplines investigating the role of healthy, safe foods in the quality of life.