Another new Biocon R&D center, a collaboration between Abbott Laboratories (#15) and Syngene, employs 50 scientists tasked with developing nutritional products for the Indian market, which is worth an estimated $1 billion. And Abbott now holds the distinction of being the largest drugmaker by market share in India, after its purchase of Pirimal Healthcare’s formulations business for $3.72 billion in 2010.

Biocon’s plans to expand internationally took a hit this year when Pfizer pulled out of a planned $350 million agreement to market biosimilars of human insulin in the United States and other key markets. The company now plans to work with regional partners and build new alliances in order to sell its insulin products.

A host of other deals between leading biopharma companies and their counterparts in the developing world have taken place over the past few months. Amgen (#13 this year, down from #6 in 2011) purchased Turkey’s Mustafa Nevzat Pharmaceuticals, a maker of injectable generic drugs, for $700 million. Merck KGaA (which includes Merck Serono/EMD Serono and is #14 this year) announced it would invest $1.5 billion in R&D in China over the next five years, and Novartis (back up to #11 after being #14 in 2011 and #11 in 2010) has cut jobs in the United States and Europe while adding employees in China and India.

Don Foster, head of research in immunology at Novo Nordisk’s R&D center in Seattle, says working with colleagues across cultures—and continents—is a very effective way to get scientists thinking outside of the box. “In research and development, especially in research, getting diversity of thought is one of the most critical things that you can do to get innovation,” he explains. Scientists at the company are encouraged to shuttle among the company’s R&D sites in Denmark, the United States, and China, by doing job rotations overseas, taking expat assignments, and going on extended business trips, according to Rebecca Capuano, the company’s senior director of human resources.

“Diversity is so important to us, and this gift of being in so many sites around the world enables the diversity,” says NIBR’s Sawyer. The company’s “mini-sabbaticals,” which offer NIBR associates the opportunity to work at other sites for up to three months, have been “extremely valuable and popular,” he adds.

Africa has also emerged as an important partner for the three agricultural chemical producers in the top 20. All have made major commitments to expand their business on the continent. DuPont (#10) announced it would invest $3 million over the next three years to help Ethiopian smallholder farmers achieve food security. In July of this year, the company opened a new office in Lagos, Nigeria, to serve as the hub for its operations in West Africa. Monsanto has said it plans to spend $50 million over the next 10 years in Africa. Syngenta (#17), the world’s largest agrochemical company, said it will invest $500 million in Africa, from which it expects to reap $1 billion in revenues over the next decade.

**MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

The responses to this year’s survey make it clear that helping patients, doing important science, and maybe even changing the world are important to scientists working in biopharma. When asked about the advantages of working in the industry, “positively impacting lives” came first, followed by “fulfilling careers,” “stability,” and “salary/benefits.”

And the companies on this year’s top 20 list make it clear that scientists working in the industry can indeed “do well by doing good.”