**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Valent BioSciences Announces Launch of Global Soil Health Initiative**

***Recognized leader in sustainable solutions for agriculture unveils pioneering rhizosphere innovation at Biostimulants World Congress***

Barcelona, Spain, November 18, 2019 – Valent BioSciences (VBC) officially launched its new biorational soil health initiative today at the 4th Biostimulants World Congress in Barcelona. The launch follows more than four years of strategic investment including the acquisition of Mycorrhizal Applications in 2015, research and development, and business development to expand the company’s leading position in biological solutions for agriculture into the soil microbiome.

In the months leading up to the launch, VBC made several moves to fortify its commitment to this new area of business. In addition to multiple acquisitions, strategic partnerships, and licensing agreements, the company opened its new state-of-the-art Biorational Research Center (BRC) last year in northern Illinois. The new facilities reflect a buildout of VBC’s research team to support soil health research and innovation. VBC also assembled a Soil Health Advisory Board to leverage knowledge from soil health experts across industry, academia, and basic research.

“Today marks the culmination of one important growth phase for Valent BioSciences and celebrates the beginning of another,” said Ted Melnik, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of VBC. “Biorational soil health is a natural extension of our business, one that promises a whole new array of possibilities for VBC, our customers, and our wide range of stakeholders around the world. It’s an exciting time.”

Soil health is recognized to be important to the future health of our planet and a new frontier in agriculture. While the physical and chemical properties of soil are better understood, we are just beginning to understand the fundamental role microbes contribute to soil health. It is estimated that more than one billion microbes can exist in a single teaspoon of healthy soil.

Central to the VBC soil health platform is a line of products under the brand name MycoApply®. These products are a scientifically selected consortium of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) species. AMF are soil-borne microbes that form a symbiotic relationship with about 80% of all plant species. By connecting to roots and forming filamentous strands called hyphae, mycorrhizae can extend the absorption area of plant root systems. AMF provide several benefits to the plant including increased water and nutrient uptake and abiotic stress mitigation. Mycorrhizal hyphae also produce a sticky glycoprotein called glomalin that forms the basis of stable soil structure by improving soil aggregation which results in improved stability, water penetration, and holding capacity. AMF are a cornerstone and indicator species of soil health but can be negatively impacted by soil disruption and intensive agricultural practices. Supplemental applications of AMF in combination with cultural practices such as cover crops and no-till programs promise to improve soil health while providing shorter-term crop health and yield benefits.

“The plant health benefits of AMF have been an evolving area of study since the late 1960s,” said Randy Martin, VBC Global Technical Development Specialist for soil health, “but it’s only recently that the full extent of the soil health benefits have become better understood.” Martin explains that AMF cannot persist in soils without a living host plant, and that tillage practices common to so many cropping systems leave soils bereft of the fungi that contribute to strong soil structure. Without AMF and glomalin, soil aggregates become unstable which reduces the soil’s water holding capacity, and the availability of water and nutrients to the plant.

The company is in the midst of the single largest research program ever devoted to AMF, with ongoing trials on 30 crops in 30 countries.

Today, at the Biostimulants World Congress (stand 6, Level 1), VBC is demonstrating 3-D root imaging technology being co-developed with the Chris Topp Laboratory at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis. Through innovative application of magnetic resonance imaging, VBC and the Topp Lab are able to monitor and observe plant root development and microbial interactions through non-destructive means for the first time in history. Visitors to the stand are able to navigate and explore plant root images like never before using powerful virtual reality equipment.

For more information on VBC’s soil health initiative and the benefits of mycorrhizal fungi, visit [www.valentbiosciences.com/soilhealth](http://www.valentbiosciences.com/soilhealth).

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About Valent BioSciences

Headquartered in Libertyville, IL, Valent BioSciences is a subsidiary of Tokyo-based Sumitomo Chemical Company and is the worldwide leader in the development, manufacturing and commercialization of biorational products with sales in 95 countries around the world. Valent BioSciences is an ISO 9001 Certified Company. For additional information, visit the company’s website at [www.valentbiosciences.com](http://www.valentbiosciences.com)

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