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## Swedish firm plans office in Annapolis

Bioenergy company Swebo to open U.S. headquarters after O'Malley mission

By Hanah Cho

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A Swedish bioenergy company will open its U.S. headquarters in Annapolis, two months after **Gov. Martin O'Malley** met with the company during an economic development mission to that country, state economic development officials announced Thursday.

Swebo Bioenergy International, which develops equipment for heating and electricity production using waste fuels, plans to open a Maryland office in the fall and hire three people to begin operations here, said Mattias Lindgren, a Swebo managing director who will head U.S. operations.

Production operations will follow shortly and will result in hiring 15 to 20 more people, Lindgren said in a phone interview from **Sweden**.

Swebo's move is the latest foreign company to invest in Maryland, a strategy that state economic development officials have been pursuing aggressively.

Besides Swebo, the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development has attracted 17 international firms to the state since April 2008.

The state has been increasing its presence abroad by opening 13 foreign offices, with most operating on a contingency basis, which requires no upfront costs until representatives attract companies to Maryland. The state plans to launch its first international incubator this year to attract foreign firms to College Park.

Officials have been working to boost Maryland exports, securing a record high of \$11.4 billion last year, a 27 percent jump over 2007. Sweden was the fastest-growing export destination for the state during the 12 months that ended in May.

"We as a state view international opportunities as one of the greatest for us to grow our economic base," said state Business and Economic Development Secretary Christian S. Johansson, a native of Sweden.

During the visit, Johansson and the governor met with Sweden's top clean-tech companies, whose goals are aligned with the state's pro-environmental policies. O'Malley invited the firms to visit Maryland, and Swebo toured Anne Arundel County and the Eastern Shore earlier this month.

Lindgren noted Annapolis' proximity to BWI Marshall Airport and Baltimore's port, as well as the state's positive business climate, as factors that brought Swebo to Maryland.

Swebo also considered Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts, Lindgren said.

"We were quite thrilled by the great support we feel from the state," he said. "We met with many people, and we feel the support and we feel welcomed."

The Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development said the state is not providing incentives to Swebo, officials said.

O'Malley representative Shaun Adamec said the company's move illustrates the importance of overseas trade missions in attracting international business to the state, and he said a Swedish delegation may soon visit Maryland. He noted that the governor gleaned many ideas for energy efficiency and environmentally friendly building practices in the country known for its green initiatives.

While there, O'Malley announced that a Maryland foreign trade office would open in Stockholm.

Baltimore Sun reporter Laura Smitherman contributed to this article.

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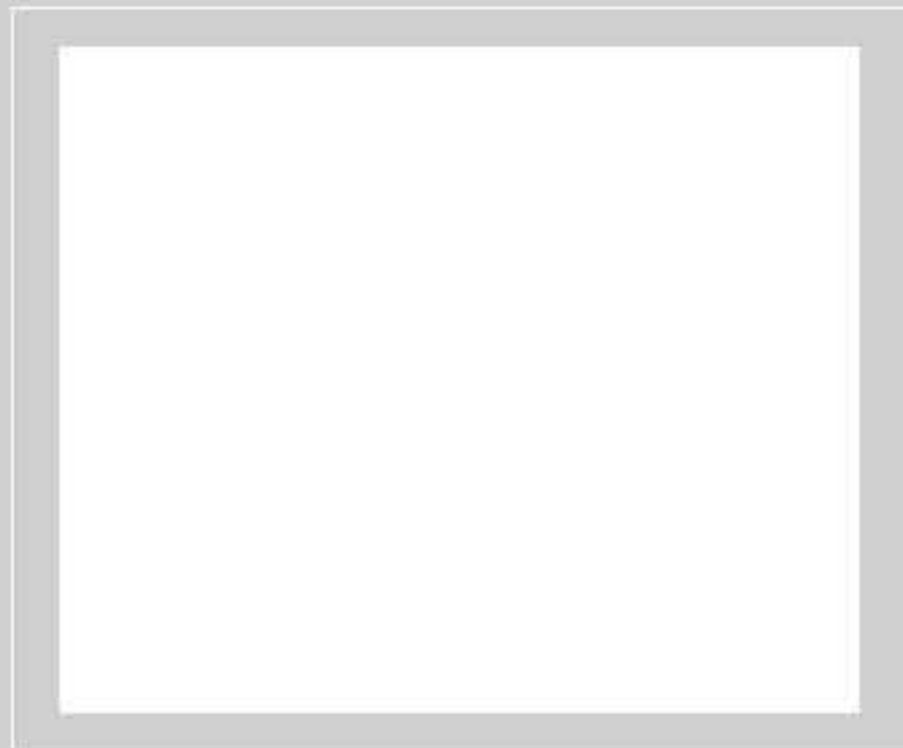
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