

A new collaboration between F-star and Merck

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F-star announced a new partnership with Merck for the development and commercialisation of five bispecific immuno-oncology antibodies (mAb2).



F-star, a biopharmaceutical company developing novel bispecific antibodies, announced a new partnership with Merck, a leading science and technology company, for the development and commercialisation of five bispecific immuno-oncology antibodies (mAb2).

Under the agreement and upon delivery of pre-defined data packages, Merck has the option to acquire five of F-star's bispecific programmes. This option includes exclusive development and commercialisation rights to F-star's preclinical lead asset FS118, which is designed to block LAG-3 (Lymphocyte-Activation Gene 3) and PD-L1 (Programmed Death-Ligand 1), two pathways commonly used by cancer cells to evade the immune system.

In a preclinical model, F-star has demonstrated that FS118 could improve efficacy compared to monotherapy combinations, which supports the potential to initiate a clinical development programme.

Upon option exercise, in addition to FS118, F-star grants Merck exclusive development and commercial rights to four novel bispecific antibodies targeting specific pathways to augment the anti-tumour immune response. In return, Merck will pay up to €115m in upfront, R&D funding and milestone payments in the first two years, and make further payments upon exercising its option and based on milestones.

This collaboration with Merck is held within F-star's fourth asset centric vehicle, F-star Delta. Upon the delivery of a pre-defined data package, Merck has an option to acquire the bispecific programmes through the acquisition of F-star Delta and will make further payments upon option exercise as well as milestones with the potential total deal value reaching over €1 billion.