Australia settles patent suit in U.S. wi-fi case

Australia's scientific research agency has reached a multi-million dollar out-of-court settlement in the United States over the use of its wireless internet technology which underpins wi-fi platforms worldwide.

The government-run Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) said the settlement for the Wireless local area networking (WLAN) patent was worth more than A$220 million ($229 million).

WLAN technology, commonly known as wi-fi, was invented by CSIRO scientists in the 1990s, and is now used in over three billion computers, smartphones and other Internet-ready devices around the world.

Since 2005, CSIRO has been suing companies for using the WLAN technology without a license. In 2009, it received A$205 million after reaching settlements with 14 companies.

Following the latest settlement with companies including Lenovo, Acer, Sony and AT&T, the CSIRO has license agreements with 23 companies. Among them are lap-top makers, mobile carriers and wireless chip makers, which represent around 90 percent of the industry.

More than five billion electronic devices will be sold around the world incorporating CSIRO's WLAN technology by the time the patents expire in 2013, the agency said.

A spokeswoman for CSIRO told Reuters on Monday that no decision had been made about further litigation, but CSIRO has not ruled out more cases.

"We couldn't see the evolution of the innovation system in the way it has, so we didn't apply for patents in Latin America, in Russia, and either China or India," Nigel Poole, acting group executive of information sciences group at CSIRO, added.

"With the benefit of hindsight of course we would have loved to have a Chinese patent or a patent in India as well," he told local radio.

(Reporting By Maggie Lu Yueyang; Editing by Jeremy Laurence)

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