

## Kentucky puts hopes in natural-products sector

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The Courier-Journal

LEXINGTON, Ky. — It could be the ultimate paradox: Tobacco that can help you quit smoking.

In a laboratory at the University of Kentucky, Peter Crooks' young company, Yaupon Therapeutics Inc., refines an extract from tobacco that it hopes to market in smoking-cessation products someday.



University of Kentucky President Lee Todd lamented that Kentucky is one of two states without a federal research and development lab.

The year-old firm, which has grown to eight full- and part-time employees, tests a type of tobacco plant that Crooks said produces a compound with fewer cardiovascular side effects than nicotine.

"We're hoping to make an impact on the smoking-cessation market," said Crooks, a UK medicinal chemist who started Yaupon with pharmacologist Linda Dwoskin.

Yaupon's effort to find alternative uses for tobacco — and harness it for commercial use — is just one example of Kentucky's growing natural-products sector, a broad group of goods derived from plants, animals and microscopic organisms.

Not to be confused with organic balms, patchouli oil or free-trade coffee, these natural products are the marriage of agriculture and technology. They are also seen as a critically underdeveloped part of Kentucky's push for new economic-development opportunities.

University of Kentucky President Lee Todd, speaking at Wednesday's inaugural state conference on Natural Products Innovation in Lexington, lamented the fact that Kentucky is one of just two states (Vermont is the other) without a federal research and development laboratory.

During his successful campaign for governor, U.S. Rep. Ernie Fletcher said bringing a federal

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