



MEDIA RELEASE

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**North Carolina's
Northeast Commission**

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Plant Biotechnology Study Released

Strong Agricultural and Research Assets Identified as Valuable to Bio Crop/Bio Fuel Development

Edenton, NC – North Carolina's Northeast Commission and the Eastern Office of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center recently teamed up to study the research and agricultural assets and the potential for plant biotechnology in the region. The draft study, being completed by RTI International in Research Triangle Park, NC, identifies the unique farming assets in the region and confirms plant biotechnology as a good rural development strategy for North Carolina's Northeast Region.

"The farmers in North Carolina's Northeast Region are highly technical people who use advanced farming techniques. They continue to train themselves on new technology, and are willing to try new crops if they see the financial benefit," states Joe Landino, Co-Chair of North Carolina's Northeast Alliance for Agricultural Biotechnology (NC-NAAB).

Located in Plymouth, NC, the Vernon James Research and Extension Center is home to NC State University researchers who use a 32,000 square foot facility and 1,560 acres of land to perform applied research in crop science and agriculture using the same land and climate features that the farmers in the area use. The study calls for expansion of the staff, lab space, and equipment at the center so that the research assets can be used by companies interested in bringing functional food crops and biofuels to the region to be grown by local farmers. The combined value of area farmers and the Vernon James Research Center were sufficient to attract Ventria Biosciences (a California-based biotech company) to Washington County. Ventria grows and processes rice that contains a protein to dramatically reduce infant deaths from diarrhea.

Functional foods are crops grown for food to add nutritional sources or additional wellness benefits that are beyond basic nutritional needs. By growing bio-crops and functional foods and processing them within the region, farmers are able to grow more lucrative crops, and new processing and support businesses can open here, providing additional jobs. Community colleges in the region are offering degrees and work force development programs in biotechnology. This education and training enables students to work in labs and processing facilities where following strict guidelines and procedures is essential.

David Peele, President of Avoca, Inc. in Merry Hill, NC, says, "Local farmers are now growing 4,500 acres of clary sage, from which we extract a chemical that is used in the fragrance industry. North Carolina has a long history in manufacturing, and I see that continuing long into the future. As world-wide energy and manufacturing costs level out, North Carolina will become an even stronger global competitor for manufacturing products."

Vann Rogerson, President/CEO of the North Carolina's Northeast Commission, states "If we are to diversify our economy and expand the capacity for new jobs, then we must look to the cutting edge of



research and production so that we can be competitive long into the future. When companies look to commercialize new plant technologies in bio-crops and biofuels, those companies will need the resources and land found in North Carolina's Northeast Region.”

John Chaffee, Director of the Eastern Office of the NC Biotechnology Center states, “Our Advisory Committee on Biotechnology in Eastern North Carolina identified emerging plant (agricultural) biotechnology as one of sixteen (16) significant opportunities to advance biotechnology-related activity in our region. I am very pleased with the content of the RTI Report and the recommended actions to capitalize on the assets of the region and generate new sources of income and jobs.”

Action recommendations to expand northeastern North Carolina's plant biotechnology sector per RTI's draft report:

1. Expand the capacity of applied science and research development by expanding the operation at the Vernon James Research and Extension Center.
2. Develop collaborations with universities, institutions, and biotechnology companies resulting in a world class plant biotechnology development partner.
3. Organize work sessions, meetings, and agendas related to the development of plant biotechnology to further define, refine, and publicize our rural bio-plant and bio-fuel partnership assets.
4. Identify educational initiatives for preparation of the biotech workforce.

About NC-NAAB:

North Carolina's Northeast Alliance for Agricultural Biotechnology is a network of university research, agri-business, agriculture, and business development resources that is committed to fostering plant made development, remaining on the cutting edge of plant made technology, and establishing a new economic niche for North Carolina's Northeast Region. Northeastern North Carolina has the land and technical resources to create a working opportunity for commercialization of plant made products. NC-NAAB is working to establish world-class collaboration in plant made opportunities.

About North Carolina's Northeast Commission:

North Carolina's Northeast Commission is dedicated to increasing the standard of living for citizens in its sixteen-county region through tourism, industrial, and business development. The 16 counties that comprise the regional Commission are: Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington. For more information about the North Carolina's Northeast Commission, contact us at www.ncnortheast.com.

About the Eastern Office of the NC Biotechnology Center:

The Biotechnology Center, with headquarters in Research Triangle Park and five regional offices statewide, is a private, non-profit corporation supported by the N.C. General Assembly. Its mission is to provide long-term economic and societal benefits to North Carolina by supporting biotechnology research, business, education and workforce training statewide. The Eastern Office, located in Greenville, opened in January, 2006.

http://www.ncbiotech.org/about_us/regional_offices_and_directions/easternNC.html

Biotechnology Definition

Biotechnology is the use of living organisms to develop new products, processes, and services.

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