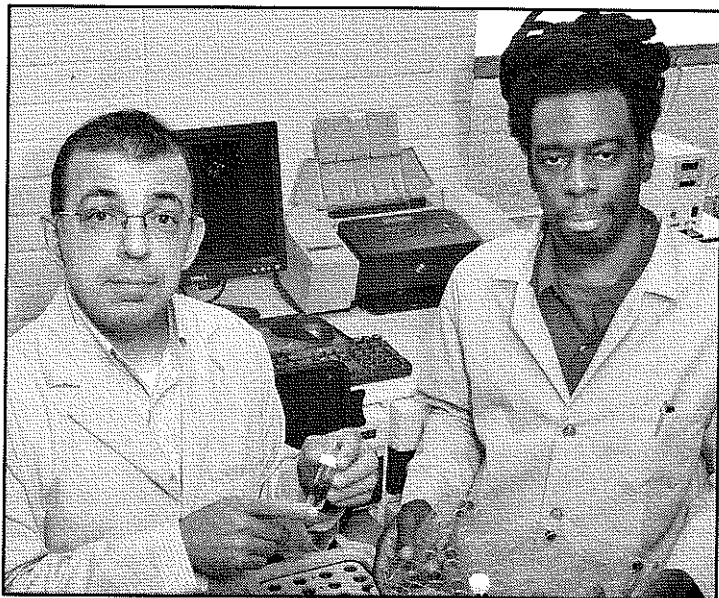


NEWS



Salam Ibrahim, an associate professor of food and nutritional sciences at N.C. A&T State University, and Aaron Vannetta, a food science major, hold materials used in testing small amounts of foods for e-coli contamination.

JULIE KNIGHT/THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

A&T licenses E. coli prevention technology

By **MATT EVANS** THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

GREENSBORO — As scientists continue to investigate the cause of a deadly recent outbreak, a technology developed at N.C. A&T State University has been snapped up by a corporate partner interested in helping to prevent future E. coli infections.

A university official confirmed the deal but declined to release specifics.

E. coli has been in the news over the past several weeks following an outbreak traced to spinach grown in central California. Three deaths and nearly 200 illnesses have been traced to that outbreak.

Tests from the Food and Drug Administration have found the E. coli strain in cow dung on fields near where the spinach was grown, but it is not yet known how the bacteria made it into the food supply.

The N.C. A&T technology that may be able to help prevent future outbreaks was developed by Salam Ibrahim, an associate professor in the university's agricultural school. The technology was awarded a patent in 2005.

Ibrahim discovered that a dose of an extract from the mint-like labiatae plant, in the right dose and in combination with other natural ingredients, can inhibit the growth of E. coli in animal and plant-based food products.

Ibrahim said the fact that the active ingredient is a natural additive should help in commercializing the technology.

"As consumers we are all looking for natural ingredients," Ibrahim said. "We were able to develop a formula based on natural ingredients that inhibit the growth of E. coli, and by doing this we can help ensure the safety of food."

Other Triad researchers are also working on E. coli. In September, for example, High Point-based nanotechnology research firm QuarTek signed a deal with a Canadian firm to distribute a new test for food-borne pathogens including E. coli. QuarTek was in negotiations with a U.S. distributor for that product as well.

Reach **MATT EVANS** at (336) 370-2916 or mlevans@bizjournals.com.