LignoLink, Inc.

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Ben Franklin Portfolio Company, LignoLink, Receives Phase II SBIR Grant

STATE COLLEGE, PA - Located in Innovation Park, Lignolink, Inc. is developing a patented technology for the genetic modification of crops to enhance digestibility for biofuels feedstock and livestock forages. Recently the company received a $750,000 Phase II Small Business Innovation Research Grant (SBIR) from the National Science Foundation. The company will use the investment to further advance their technology which improves the breakdown of biomass into sugars.

Lignin is a critical component of plant cell walls, providing strength to the plant, but its structure is a significant barrier to digestion by both livestock and biochemical processes. The technology causes plants to insert proteins into the lignin structure in cell walls, creating “lignolinks” for faster, easier breakdown of lignin. This breakdown, or pre-treatment, is the largest single cost in biofuels production, and can be a limiting factor in economic viability. The company’s technology will make cellulosic biofuels more commercially viable and environmentally friendly by permitting the use of milder pretreatment conditions leading to greater product yields.

A Ben Franklin Technology Partners portfolio company (www.cnp.benfranklin.org), Lignolink’s core technology was invented by Penn State University Professors Ming Tien and John Carlson who are also the founders of the company. Lignolink has exclusively licensed the technology, which was patented by the University, for commercial use. In addition to SBIR funding, the company was supported in its early stages by Ben Franklin Technology Partners through its traditional investment fund program as well as its’ Entrepreneur-in-Residence support.

Ben Franklin Technology Partners/CNP, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and funded by the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority, provides investment capital, operational assistance, and entrepreneurial support to emerging tech-based companies and small, existing manufacturers for the purpose of creating and retaining jobs in Pennsylvania.