Crawfish waste processors soon go into full swing

HENDERSON — Maybe you can’t make a silk purse from a sow’s ear, but one Acadiana company will begin early next month transforming smelly crawfish waste into valuable natural food coloring and protein-rich meal.

Acadiana Processors, Inc. of Henderson, the first research idea developed through LSU’s Office of Technology Transfer to go into full-scale commercial operation, expects to process more than 20 million pounds of crawfish waste this season.

The plant will transform wastes from crawfish processing plants in St. Martin Parish, using technology developed by LSU food science professor Dr. Sam Meyers.

Some 10 years ago, Meyers began trying to find a use for the 85 percent of the crawfish carcass that is discarded after the tail meat is extracted. November to July each year. Crawfish wastes could bring in from $20-25 million a year. The dye can also be used in tropical bird and fish rations to bring out the animals' rich colors, and it can be added to poultry feed to turn egg yolks from pale to dark yellow.

While the Henderson plant is the most successful commercial project to come out of LSU’s Office of Technology Transfer, it is not the only one.

Ted Kohn, LSU associate director of technology transfer, said his office is working to turn some 28 LSU research projects into business realities.

LSU’s research effort is vitally important to the state as a whole because it constitutes a search for new products and processes which often have the economic potential for new jobs, according to Dr. Sean McGlynn, vice-chancellor of the Office of Research.

“Ninety percent of our new jobs come from small businesses, and the primary generator of small businesses are the universities and their products,” McGlynn said. “In today’s marketplace, you cannot separate the universities from economic development.”

“While we need are small homegrown businesses that are going to stay in Louisiana,” he added, noting that LSU faculty members have started some 80 small businesses in the last 10 years.

Kohn pointed out that LSU’s Office of Technology Transfer helped start the Board of Regents’ Quest for Technology program, which is a statewide search for commercially sound ideas and technologies developed at Louisiana universities.