Who will grow, refine medical marijuana?

Experts say new state law puts Southern, LSU in gray legal area.

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The LSU and Southern University Agricultural Centers have been granted first crack at being the sole growers and producers of medical marijuana in Louisiana.

"I am glad they are discussing the project. They have interest in the project, and I think they're just trying to make sure it's something they are going to be allowed to do," Strain said earlier this month. "But some officials oppose, spokesman for the state's Department of Agriculture and Forestry, said that the proposal for marijuana refinement and growing led to an unidentified "affiliates" to process the marijuana. LSU AgCenter is taking a wait-and-see approach as Strain's department, the state Board of Medical Examiners create rules to apply to the law. New guidelines have been established, we will consult with LSU's president and Board of Supervisors to determine our involvement," Richardson said.

Adell Brown Jr., interim chancellor of Southern University AgCenter, said officials are trying to gather data, "doing due diligence," Richardson said. "What do you want, who grow, what you sell," Brown said.

He added that LSU may be involved in the marijuana business as a potential positive. "We can't afford to close any door, but at the same time, we can't be rash and move forward with the due diligence," Brown said.

Since 1996, 23 states, the District of Columbia and Guam have adopted comprehensive medical marijuana laws. Another 15 states, including Louisiana, have adopted more limited-use, low-THC medical marijuana laws, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

In addition, Colorado and Washington's approved recreational use in 2012, and Alaska and Oregon are finalizing recreational-use laws.

Neither Southern nor LSU has contacted the USDA about its new law, USDA spokeswoman Cochran said. If USDA were contacted, it would conduct a closed-door review and the U.S. Department of Justice.

"Until that time, it would not be appropriate to speculate on any implication," Cochran said.

A U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration spokeswoman declined to speculate on the new state law.

In Maryland, Morhaim and other delegates requested that state's 2013 medical marijuana law, which was passed as a political compromise with a more skittish state officials but did create a rule-making marijuana commission.

"We passed it to get it through the eye of the needle and have something of nothing. The next year, we revamped it and revamped it again," Morhaim said.

State law in Maryland now allows private, licensed marijuana production and distribution. Morhaim said Maryland should have medical marijuana available in a year.

Mills, the senator who sponsored the Louisiana law, said he is aware of the pitfalls some have pointed out but plans to work with the medical community to do just that, Ranatza said.

"I don't think it would be the campaign of medical marijuana in Louisiana. We are told that the state will allow 10 pharmacies to be licensed statewide to provide marijuana to medical marijuana patients. "The growth of medical marijuana and symptoms from cancer chemotherapy or spastic quadriplegia. Patients will need a prescription from a physician. The AgCenters will decide who they will grow and refining an extract or oil - a not a product that can be smoked.

"We have the lowest possible concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol. The marijuana that they grow will have to be grown in a facility for the entire state in a publicly disclosed location.

State Agriculture and Forestry Commissioner Mike Strain, who has tried to temper expectations for a quick application, said he has been upbeat about the prospects, said he sent a highly restrictive proposal to the Louisiana legislature to separate a separate area for processing.

Despite these visions, the basic rules of the law are largely the same for LSU and Southern. That is the federal government lists marijuana as a Schedule I drug. Marijuana on par with heroin and deems it not to have a medical value but dangerous for abuse.

As the nation's anti-drug policies have become enmeshed in the wider debate about marijuana, the administration has run into a disconnect between the states and the drug war. "I really don't see a situation where a public university would grow commercial cannabis, which is still illegal in Louisiana," said Michael Ranatza, the Sheriffs' Association was contacted by some to oppose the bill, but the changes, including that private operations could not be proper to speculate on the new state law.

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