Gene technology develops longer, stronger cotton fiber

An international team with Texas A&M University ties is using cutting-edge genetic engineering techniques to suppress expression of a key protein in cotton plants.

Their objective is to create a longer, stronger cotton fiber, which TAMU biologist Dr. Alan Pepper believes could potentially have a multi-billion-dollar impact on the global cotton industry, and help cotton farmers fend off increasing competition from synthetic fibers. The team's findings to date were detailed in the journal *Nature Communications* last week.

"This technology allows improvement of fiber quality in upland cotton, which is widely grown everywhere," says co-author Dr. Alan Pepper, an associate professor in the Texas A&M Department of Biology and senior author of the research paper that was led by a former Texas A&M graduate student now in Uzbekistan. "This will increase the competitiveness of natural cotton fibers versus synthetic fibers, which have been snagging an increasing amount of the market share every year."

Read the full, original article: Texas A&M Biologist, Former Student Use Gene Technology To Develop Longer, Stronger Cotton Fiber