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Official: Granville may get bio-agro facility

BY WILLIAM F. WEST, The Herald-Sun

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OXFORD -- Granville County Economic Development Director Leon Turner says he believes the county stands a "50-50 chance" of getting a massive federal "bio-agro" facility to protect the nation's food supply.

Published reports have said the center could cost as much as \$450 million to build and could employ as many as 400 people. A decision on a short list of possible sites is on hold until at least the summer because the federal government wants more information, Turner said Tuesday.

While Turner acknowledges the top sites for the project haven't been chosen -- the number is 18 at the moment -- he said the potential site locally is near the Federal Correctional Institution facilities at Butner.

Turner appeared later in the evening before the Oxford City Commission with an update. He said he believed the Tar Heel state would be on the short list, "for a lot of reasons," but most importantly because of the quality of N.C. State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

"That's our ace in the hole," Turner said.

And Turner cites the presence of Duke University, UNC and the Environmental Protection Agency's research campus in Research Triangle Park.

The facility reportedly would replace an aging animal disease center near Long Island, N.Y., and would increase the center's mission to reportedly conduct research and vaccines to fight animal and human diseases. It would reportedly employ experts from the Departments of Homeland Security, Agriculture and Health and Human Services.

A final decision on a location reportedly still is unexpected until 2008, with construction anticipated to start the next year and take up to 2013 to complete.

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