

Leicester researchers develop technologies to crack down on counterfeit whisky

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Experts at the University of Leicester's Space Research Centre are working with colleagues at De Montfort University to create a handheld device which will detect fake whisky and wine – through the bottle.

The exciting research project to crack down on counterfeit [whisky](#) and [wine](#) is being supported by The [Food](#) and Drink iNet.

The technology has already been developed by the University of Leicester team to spot counterfeit medicines by scrutinising the packaging. Now the experts are working to transfer the technology to analyse liquids in bottles.

As well as helping to stamp out the big problem of counterfeit whisky and fine wine, this could also have major potential for airline security systems, they believe.

The technique relies on detecting the differences between the characteristics of light reflected from printed packaging. Originally developed from a spectrometer designed and built by the Space Research Centre for astronomical research, the technique was adapted for use in the pharmaceutical world by the University of Leicester team in conjunction with university spin-out firm Perpetuity Research and Consultancy International Limited which is a specialist crime and security consultancy.

Now the technology is being adapted again by the University of Leicester team for use in detecting fake liquids, with experts at De Montfort University providing skills in product design and rapid prototyping so that a [handheld device](#) can be created.

“The support from the Food and Drink iNet will allow us to take the technology and apply it in the case of whisky and fine wines,” said Tim Maskell, Knowledge Transfer Manager in the Space Research Centre at the University of Leicester. “The iNet funding will enable us to design, build and test a laboratory prototype that will allow us to prove the technology works. If we can then take the technology and do something similar with other liquids there are potential airport security opportunities too.”

The project is one of five Collaborative Research and Development grants worth a total of more than £235,000 announced by the Food and Drink iNet, which co-ordinates innovation support for businesses, universities and individuals working in the food and drink sector in the East Midlands. The team has been awarded £50,000 towards the almost £71,000 cost of the research project.

Funded by East Midlands Development Agency (emda) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Food and Drink iNet is one of four regional iNets that has developed an effective network to link academic and private sector expertise and knowledge with local food and drink business innovation needs.

“This is a fascinating research project between the University of Leicester, De Montfort University, the Scotch Whisky Research Institute and Leicestershire brewery Everards, which brings together space technology and the food and drink sector and offers real commercial benefit,” said Food and Drink iNet Director Richard Worrall. “Being able to test a liquid such as whisky or wine for authenticity without

opening the bottle would bring major benefits to the drinks industry, as well as having opportunities in other fields, such as airport and airline security.

“The Food and Drink iNet Collaborative Research and Development programme is designed to provide help for innovative research schemes that will benefit the food and drink sector in the future, and this is one of the more interesting and beneficial.”

The team is working with The Scotch Whisky Research Institute and Leicestershire brewery Everards to help with the research and product trials.

The Food and Drink iNet aims to build on the tradition of innovation in the food and drink industry in the region by helping to create opportunities to develop knowledge and skills, and to help research, develop and implement new products, markets, services and processes. It is managed by a consortium, led by the Food and Drink Forum and including Food Processing Faraday, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Lincoln, and the University of Nottingham. It is based at Southglade Food Park, Nottingham, with advisors covering the East Midlands region.

Provided by University of Leicester

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