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Parkdale Mills Supplies Coronavirus Test Swabs to FDA-Led Effort

By [Arthur Friedman](#)



President Donald Trump holds swabs, one that could be used in coronavirus testing, center, as he speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House.

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[Parkdale](#) Mills subsidiary U.S. [Cotton](#), the nation's largest manufacturer of cotton swabs, has joined in an effort with the Food & Drug Administration (FDA), the Gates Foundation, UnitedHealth Group and Quantigen to ramp up production of spun synthetic swabs to help health care workers administering tests for [coronavirus](#).

U.S. Cotton has developed a fully synthetic, [polyester](#)-based Q-tip-type swab that can be used in coronavirus diagnostic testing. The FDA just announced that these synthetic swabs—with a design similar to Q-tips—could be used to test patients for the coronavirus.

U.S. Cotton, based in Cleveland, plans to leverage its large-scale manufacturing capacity to rapidly increase production of large quantities of the polyester swabs that are in short supply for testing kits across the country. The FDA has determined that spun synthetic

swabs can be used in COVID-19 testing based on the results from a clinical investigation stemming from its collaboration with UnitedHealth Group, the Gates Foundation and Quantigen.

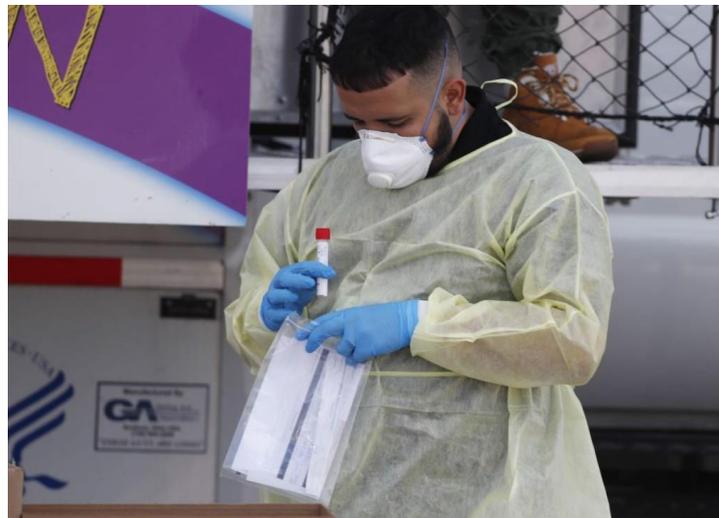
“We stand ready to serve in this important fight and want to do all we can to help deploy these testing kit swabs for the American people,” John Nims, president of U.S. Cotton, said.

Anderson Warlick, chairman and CEO of Parkdale/U.S. Cotton, credited support to White House Trade Advisor and National Defense Production Act policy coordinator Dr. Peter Navarro for helping coordinate the initiative, as well as Ohio Sens. Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman, and Gov. Mike DeWine.

This is the second major COVID-19 relief project that Parkdale has helped lead. Earlier, Parkdale helped construct a supply chain that includes Hanes, Fruit of the Loom and many other U.S. [apparel and textile companies](#) in the production of personal protective equipment (PPE) masks desperately needed by frontline medical staff treating the virus.

While companies like Parkdale and U.S. Cotton have [pivoted production](#) from various apparel and textile products to making PPE, many factories and workers around the world have been suffering.

Kai Hughes, executive director of the International Cotton Advisory Council (ICAC), described in an open letter to the cotton community how the pandemic’s enormous impact can already be seen in the cotton and textile value chain.



Medical technician at a Stride Community Health Center COVID-19 drive-thru testing site loads a vial containing a swab from a test kit into an envelope.

“Whether you are a farmer in India who is finding it difficult to get inputs in time or you are a garment manufacturer in Bangladesh who has just had your orders cancelled by a brand because no one is buying clothes, the results are the same: Jobs and businesses are disappearing and with over 250 million workers employed in our industry—most of them poor—this is devastating and will in many cases lead to destitution, or worse,” Hughes said.

“It is also equally difficult to imagine the plight of the 28 million small-holder cotton farmers—24 million in Asia and 4 million in Africa—whose livelihood primarily depends on cotton,” he added.

Hughes said the ICAC is pulling together all of the different strands of information it can to offer some early indications as to what cotton’s “new world order” will look like.

“We must now start thinking of what a post-COVID-19 world is going to look like and how cotton can meet its challenges while taking advantage of whatever opportunities it may bring,” he said. “We are doing everything we can to gather the information we need, including the creation of a brief update survey that we’re promoting to visitors on www.icac.org and distributing it for the benefit of the cotton industry.”

ICAC has launched a “Cotton Connects” series of video interviews in which global cotton and textile leaders discuss what is happening on the ground in their particular country or industry sector. In addition, it is planning to bring together all the key organizations in the cotton and textile supply chain from governments and key United Nations and international organizations, as well as private-sector businesses, to develop strategies to revitalize cotton and protect the livelihood of millions of people.