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Brazilian Researchers Test Beer Waste for Sunscreen

Spent hops showed promising ultraviolet protection in early laboratory tests, raising hopes for a natural cosmetic ingredient.

Tuesday, May 5, 2026



Researchers in Brazil are studying whether spent hops from beer production could be turned into an ingredient for sunscreen, a line of work that points to a possible use for a brewing byproduct that is usually discarded.

The work, led by scientists in São Paulo, focuses on the residue left after hops are used in brewing. In laboratory tests, the spent hops showed promising ultraviolet protection and appeared to improve photoprotective activity when compared with hops that had not been used in beer production. The findings are still early and were based on in vitro experiments, meaning they were done outside a living organism and have not yet been confirmed in people.

Hops are already known for compounds that can absorb UV radiation, which is why researchers have been looking at them as a possible source of natural ingredients for skin-care products. The new study suggests that the brewing process may not eliminate that value. Instead, it may change the plant material in a way that makes it useful for further development.

The researchers said more testing is needed before any commercial use can be considered. That would include safety studies, formulation work and trials to see whether the material performs well in finished products on skin. For now, the interest is in whether a waste stream from beer production can be redirected into higher-value uses.

The idea fits into broader efforts to find new applications for agricultural and food-industry leftovers. In this case, the goal is to turn a brewing residue into a bioproduct with potential use in cosmetics, while also reducing waste in the beer supply chain.