

Algae: A Fuel Alternative

Mark Hamerick:

With crude oil prices continuing to climb, one company is hoping to take the concept of "green fuel" to a whole new level. Bio Fuel Systems, or BFS, a Spanish firm running the project, says it can pull off in one day what Mother Nature took millions of years to accomplish. CO₂ is pumped into tubes filled with liquid algae from sea water. Sunlight in the patented industrial process then turns the algae into oil. Call it "enhanced photosynthesis." BFS calls it an inexpensive and sustainable way to produce fuel. The CO₂ used in the process is captured from a nearby cement factory.

Bernard A. J. Stroïazzo-Mougin:

You know, the main problem of fossil oil is for each barrel of oil, you issue 450 kilos of CO₂. In our system, it's the reverse. For each barrel we burn in a car or in an aircraft or whatever you want, uh, we reduce one ton of CO₂.

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Ninety-eight percent of the extracted biomass can be refined into gasoline or other fuels. The remaining 2 percent can be used in the pharmaceutical or cosmetic industries. BFS says that's the key issue to become profitable. If it can offset the costs of using the oil as energy with the higher profit margins with pharmaceuticals, it estimates that bio-oil could be around sixty dollars a barrel.

Mark Hamerick:

Mark Hamerick, The Associated Press.

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