

CASE STUDY

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The Concept:

Fuelling vehicles with plant oils

We live in increasingly environmentally conscious times, and motorists are bearing the brunt of responsibility for fossil fuel emissions. For many motorists, switching to a sustainable, renewable fuel source with a reduced carbon footprint is high on the agenda. Blooming Futures, a Shoreham based company, has developed the technology required to convert diesel engines to run on pure plant oil (PPO), which is the most sustainable motor fuel currently being produced. Production of PPOs (in this case, rapeseed oil) uses much lower energy processes and simpler technology than diesel and more importantly, the fuel itself is carbon neutral.

The Background

Blooming Futures began research into production of alternative, sustainable fuels as a renewable energy source in 1999 and initially converted vehicles to run on high and low-pressure gas. The revenue from conversions to gas usage provided the funding necessary to progress research into fossil free fuels and PPOs. After several years, extensive research (a lot of it unpaid!) and numerous trials, the team at Blooming Futures carried out their first conversion to PPO. Since then, the team have enjoyed some highly positive and important publicity, carrying out a number of high profile conversions: a VW Transporter for Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's River Cottage Farm (and featured on his tv series), a tractor for racing's Jody Schekter and recently agreed to convert five vehicles for Brighton & Hove City Council who have been instrumental in helping fund research. They have also entirely powered several large events using Pure Plant Oil Power. Blooming Futures have evolved to become one of the most experienced PPO engineering companies in the UK.

Services

As well as converting vehicles, they have established a consultancy to advise farmers and farming organisations that are interested in the production of PPOs, minimising, if not avoiding, any impact on the landscape. Production of the raw materials needs to be incorporated into the range of crops grown in the UK in order to maintain a sustainable fuel supply.

Future Aims

Blooming Futures aims to establish a supply chain of locally sourced PPO and make it readily available to both private and commercial users. Germany, for example, already has tens of thousands of vehicles running on rapeseed oil and Blooming Futures aim to develop the UK market in the same way, thus increasing the number of PPO users.

The Bio-Fleet Project

Raising awareness of the possibilities of using PPO is integral to the Blooming Futures promotional plans. They set up the Bio-Fleet Project: a fleet of 50 highly-visible vehicles running on the sustainable fuel. The fleet comprises vehicles from 50 businesses in the South East who agreed to a conversion, part funded by DEFRA, to run on PPO. The project, running from 2005 to 2009, will also progress development of a local fuel supply.

The Bio-Fleet is backed by DEFRA, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, under the Environmental Action Fund and the Network for Social Change.

Recognition

In 2006, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Rt Hon David Miliband, visited the site and the company put forward the idea of PPO as a viable fuel model. Later that year, it was announced that Blooming Futures had won The SouthEast Renewable Energy Award for Innovation.

This is brought to you by the West Sussex Social Enterprise Network (WSSSEN).

For more information visit www.wssen.org.uk

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