Biofuel plant to be built in Sacramento

Primafuel, a biofuel production plant based in Long Beach, Calif., recently was awarded the largest grant in history from the California Air Resources Board for biodiesel production, which the company will use to build Sacramento's first biofuel production plant.

Primafuel's mission is to produce zero-carbon fuels to reduce the world's dependence on petroleum.

"The ultimate goal for us is to have a totally sustainable supply chain, resulting in no net increase in carbon dioxide, or in other words 'zero-carbon fuels.' We want to ensure that the end product isn't just clean-burning, but that the entire supply chain behind it is equally sustainable," said Doug Heckman, public information officer for Primafuel.

The $164,000 grant will fund the development of a 60 million-gallon biodiesel manufacturing facility at the North Terminal facility in West Sacramento. The project, which is still in the developmental stages, will be the first of this scale, but there are others under development in California and in strategic markets around the world. Since 2005, when the company first opened its doors, Primafuel's founders and senior-management team have commercialized low-carbon-fuel technology and infrastructure projects on five continents through partnerships with agencies such as the World Bank and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The World Economic Forum just named Primafuel a 2008 Technology Pioneer for innovative approach to biofuels production and distribution infrastructure.

"We've been working at a frantic pace and it's fulfilling to see our technologies and innovative concepts brought into the market space," Heckman said. "It's been a high-paced ride and we pride ourselves in not only being a thinking company but also a working company."

Heckman says there will certainly be better fuels and technologies in the future, but we can't get there without first improving the technologies of today. One concept is a bolt-on technology for biodiesel plants that converts the byproduct glycerin into a higher-value chemical. The company has also developed a similar technology for corn-ethanol plants, which improves the overall energy output of an ethanol plant by more than 10 percent, dramatically improving the economics and productivity, resulting in a lower-carbon fuel.

Primafuel is in discussions with commercial biofuel plant operators around the world to implement this technology in 2008, Heckman said.

Last month, Primafuel addressed attendees of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia, about the company's approach to practical and sustainable biofuels production.

—Kimberly Hore-Web