

Florida energy farm to research biofuels crops

By Erin Voegele

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America's first eco-sustainable city, Destiny, Fla., announced Aug. 27 it has created Florida's first sustainable energy farm. The Destiny Sustainable Energy Farm will be a learning center where new farming techniques and practices can be showcased and designed to produce energy crops for alternative fuels.

A proposed 41,300 acre self-contained green community, Destiny will be designed to ensure environmental, social and economic stability for its residents. Currently in the planning states, Destiny is working with the state of Florida and Osceola County to secure entitlement. While the city continues with this process, a small portion of the land has become home to farm-to-fuel initiative Destiny Sustainable Energy Farm.

"Destiny's Energy Farm will be a proving ground for technologies and practices of the future and is a testament to our commitment to create a truly eco-sustainable community in the state," said Destiny founder Anthony V. Pugliese, III. "It's just the beginning of building a city that operates with minimal impact on the environment and serves as a scientific hub where the latest green technology innovations will emerge."

Twenty acres of sweet sorghum have already been planted, with plans to plant other experimental plots to test different varieties of sweet sorghum, soil conditions and treatments for growth response patterns and crop yields. According to Ben Scheffres, a chemist at Global Renewable Energy, the farm plans to begin planting jatropha within the next month, beginning with a small half-acre plot. Algae research is also planned. The energy farm is currently pursuing grant money to build a mini-ecosystem. Research will begin once funding is secured. In addition, the energy farm will consider testing sunflowers in the future.

Crop samples will be gathered and taken to the University of Florida to measure yields-per-acre and determine the potential for biofuel production. The studies are expected to also provide the cost of producing fuel from these types of energy crops. The Destiny Sustainable Energy Farm's goal is to research crop species to maximize alternative fuel production for the city of Destiny, Fla., and explore new agricultural food production for the community.

The energy farm is a cooperate effort between several private/public individuals and companies including the University of Florida, Green Technologies LLC, Everglades Farm Equipment, American Drilling Services Inc., Global Renewable Energy, Southern Farms, Energy Structures and Systems Inc., and Bio Greens Oil USA LLC. The city of Destiny is being developed by real estate developer Anthony V. Pugliese, III, and Subway Restaurants' founder Fred DeLuca.