Biorefinery pilot plant nears full production

The Stan Mayfield Biorefinery Pilot Plant located at Buckeye looks to hit near full production in the next few weeks, University of Florida Professor Dr. Lonnie Ingram told the Perry Kiwanis Club last week.

“We’re thinking we’ll be making large batches of ethanol by the end of the month,” Ingram said.

The University of Florida’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), partnered with Buckeye to construct the 18,000 square-foot facility in 2009. Completing construction in 2011, several setbacks have delayed the facility going into full production but those issues have mostly been settled.

Much of the plant’s research will be based on Ingram’s work as the University of Florida’s distinguished professor of microbiology and cell science, and director of the Florida Center for Renewable Chemicals and Fuels.

Several years ago, Ingram engineered an E. coli bacterium that breaks down inedible plant material into sugars that can be processed into fuel-grade cellulosic ethanol. Variations of the technology are already at work in fuel plants in Louisiana and Japan.

While much of the United States’ 15 billion gallons per year production of ethanol relies on corn, Ingram hopes to utilize non-food feedstock like waste wood at the Taylor County pilot plant to produce ethanol.

In addition to fuel, Ingram hopes other products can be derived from the plant such as plastics, solvents and even disposable cups capable of handling hot drinks.

Sixteen employees are now on hand at the pilot plant, Ingram said, enough to run the plant around the clock.

Plant has 16 employees ‘round the clock’

BIOREFINERY
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