

View Full Version : [It's Not Often That You Beat Richard Branson To The Punch...](#)

Nevada_Ballin

10-15-2007, 01:38 PM

But we did. Check out the following article regarding Branson's Virgin Air upcoming tests for biofuels followed by tests we've (company i work for) already done.

By Al Yoon
2 hours, 20 minutes ago

BOSTON (Reuters) - British billionaire Richard Branson said on Monday his Virgin Group hopes to produce clean biofuels by around the start of the next decade and early next year will test a jet plane on renewable fuel.

Virgin hopes to provide clean fuel for buses, trains and cars within three or four years, Branson told a Mortgage Bankers Association meeting in Boston.

In the meantime, Virgin will be conducting a test jet flight on renewable fuels. "Early next year we will fly one of our 747s without passengers with one of the fuels that we have developed," Branson told the annual conference.

Virgin is developing biofuels for aircraft in conjunction with Boeing Co and engine-maker GE Aviation, a unit of General Electric Co. Previously, Branson had said the company would test the fuel sometime next year and that some people had said it would be late in the year.

Air New Zealand has said it plans to test a flight on a combination fuel of biofuel and kerosene in late 2008, but Virgin is trying to beat that airline by testing biofuels first.

Branson pledged last year to spend all the profit over the next 10 years from his 51 percent stake in Virgin's airline and rail businesses on fighting global warming.

He also created Virgin Fuels, which is investing \$400 million over three years in renewable energy initiatives, as part of the pledge.

Biofuels, at this point mostly ethanol and biodiesel, have witnessed explosive growth this year amid record oil prices and concern about global warming. They are believed to emit less greenhouse gases because they are made from plants like corn and soybeans that absorb carbon dioxide, the main heat-trapping gas, when they grow.

Cutting emissions of heat-trapping gases from transportation sources is more difficult than cutting them from stationary sources like power plants. Power stations can switch from coal, the heaviest greenhouse gas emitter, to cleaner burning natural gas.

On Monday, Branson said jets may have problems using ethanol, the most common biofuel, which is made mainly from corn in the United States and sugar cane in Brazil.

He said ethanol freezes at 15,000 feet and that butanol, a fuel similar to gasoline that can be made from biomass, may be a better alternative. It is also less corrosive than ethanol.

Virgin Fuels has invested in a small number of U.S. ethanol projects and hopes eventually to produce branded biofuels, the company's managing partner said earlier this year.

Separately, Branson said Virgin would name one of its Galactic crafts -- planned for use in space tourism -- after his friend Steve Fossett, the millionaire adventurer who disappeared in a small private plane in the U.S. West early last month.

Test flights of the Galactic crafts begin next year and passenger service is expected to begin in 2009.

That's awesome and we fully endorse these efforts, but guess what Richard....

French-fried flight
Pat Patera, 10/15/2007

Aviation history was made this month at Reno-Stead Airport, site of the world's first jet flight powered solely by biodiesel fuel, says Rudi Wiedemann, president and chief executive officer of Biodiesel Solutions Inc.

His Sparks company provided the fuel that powered the plane. That fuel might formerly have fried fries.

"A lot of people don't know what's possible," says Wiedemann. A mutual friend got him together with Douglas Rodante, founder of Green Flight International of Orlando, Fla., and the flight plan took wing.

"What really captured my imagination was not financial profit but the opportunity to make a statement about what is possible right now," says Wiedemann. "Boeing, Air New Zealand, want to run one engine on 20 percent biofuel — next year — maybe. But Rodante said, 'Why don't we just try it?'"

The World War II-era Czechoslovakian-made aircraft can fly on a variety of fuels including heating oil, so it was a natural for the biofuels test, says Rodante.

"It flew just fine," says Wiederman of the hour-long flight to 17,000 feet.

His company contributed 500 gallons of fuel to the project, which had conducted a series of test flights, each using a greater percentages of biofuel until the 100 percent biofuel point was reached.

"We are a lot further along in adopting biodiesel than a lot of people imagine," he adds. "If it can power a plane, how about your pickup truck? We're going to use it as a statement about applicability in other applications not as exotic, such as farm equipment. It's a confidence builder."

The team plans a transcontinental flight from California to Florida later this year. Biodiesel Solutions in Sparks was purchased in July by Renewal Fuels, based in Milwaukee. The acquisition by a publicly-traded company brought Biodiesel additional capital to go into production with Biodiesel Master, a system that converts waste oils such as french fry fat into biodiesel fuel.

Wiedemann, a retired Silicon Valley chip entrepreneur, says customers can replace their use of No. 2 diesel gallon-for-gallon with the output of Biodiesel Solutions' system, or they can mix biodiesel with conventional fuels.

And if demand outstrips the supply of used cooking oil — estimated at some 3 billion gallons a year in the United States — the units run just as well on feedstocks ranging from crude palm oil to algae.

<http://www.nnbw.biz/ArticleRead.aspx?storyID=9770>

Sit tight Planet Earth, we're gonna do our best to keep you healthy :D

blitzrique

10-15-2007, 02:28 PM

From what I've read over the years, ethanol [not what NB is into] is overrated and may actually cause more problems than it solves. Cellulosic ethanol is supposed to hold more promise. Not sure where biodiesel fits in to all this.

kevin21boston

10-15-2007, 03:08 PM

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ethanol is vastly overrated, but i think it is what is most likely to compete with gasoline in the near future.

biodiesel is a viable option.

But the future is solar. so much potential and promise and now it is just starting to be harnessed.

Nevada_Ballin

10-15-2007, 03:20 PM

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Yep, ethanol isn't an answer. It's "energy negative" emaning it takes more energy to make it than the energy it produces (petroleum fuel is also the same - it takes about 3 gallons of gasoline to produce one gallon).

But ethanol seems to be the poster child for "renewable energy" these days (kind of sad but that's how much power lobbyists have in DC).

You're correct on the cellulose ethanol but again, that may also end up being energy negative.

Where does biodiesel fit? It's already EPA approved, natually low in sulphur yet high in lubricity, has a higher cetane