Purdue Scientist Develops New Biofuel Process

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (AP) — Purdue University says a new process for creating biofuels developed by one of the school's researchers has potential to be priced competitively with crude oil.

The H2Bioil method was created in the West Lafayette, Ind. laboratory of chemical engineering professor Rakesh Agrawal.

The process exposes biomass such as switchgrass to pressurized hydrogen and heats it to about 900 degrees Fahrenheit. Catalysts then separate oxygen from carbon molecules, making the carbon rich in energy.

A Purdue economic analysis shows that the biofuel's cost can be competitive when crude oil is about $100 per barrel. The method has worked on a laboratory scale and is being refined so it could become effective on a commercial scale.

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