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## The green revolution: when does it become reality?

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FORT MYERS, Fla.- Dozens of Southwest Floridians attended a sustainability conference in South Fort Myers on Thursday. They saw displays of renewable energy technologies. But WINK News wondered about some recent local ventures.

We asked first about the bio-fuels plant that's been under construction in Fort Myers for nearly three years. Half a million federal tax dollars helped to finance the place. It's supposed to turn grease and cooking oil into fuel.

"The good news is, they are in the testing phase now, and they should be up and running next month, December," said Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah. "It will be a cost savings for the county, as we will get fuel for buses and vehicles from the plant. I believe the school board may be interested too, for fuel for school buses."

Then we asked about Jatropa, the plants that some had boasted would revolutionize local farming. Beans from the plant produce an oil that can become fuel. Local leaders planted a test plot of jatropa more than four years ago in Buckingham. Now, only a few plants remain. The rest fell victim to freezes or floods.

"I have gained a great deal of information from that plot and it is making a tremendous difference for jatropa growing in South America," said Roy Beckford of the University of Florida agriculture extension service.

We asked, what about us?

"We will not see it in this area for awhile. We are working on a hybrid that can better withstand the cold," said Beckford. We asked: how do you keep your hopes up for a green revolution? "Well at times you get frustrated. But you can't change things overnight. If you can reach the young people, you can change things in one generation," said Beckford.

Lee resident Shawn Sullivan is not sold. "The oil companies have control in Washington. I don't see the green energy taking over, in a big way, anytime soon," he told WINK News.

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