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## Farming Fuel in Middle Eastern Salt Marshes

**A new biofuels project at Abu Dhabi's Masdar Institute of Science and Technology will search for a system to produce fuel from biomass and seawater**

By Jenny Mandel

A new biofuels project at Abu Dhabi's [Masdar Institute of Science and Technology](#) will unite [Boeing](#), [Honeywell](#) and others in search of a system to produce fuel and other useful products from biomass and seawater.

The Sustainable Bioenergy Research Project is focused on integrating [aquaculture](#) and farming to create a closed-loop system that thrives in areas where fresh water is scarce.

Waste from the aquaculture project will be used to fertilize mangrove forests and plantations of another saltwater plant, and the resultant [biomass](#) will be used to make aviation biofuels and clean energy.

A cooperative agreement for the project was signed Sunday at the [World Future Energy Summit](#) in Abu Dhabi.

The project is seen as a way to produce fuel in [arid environments](#) with ample saltwater supplies.

Backers said the integrated seawater agriculture system captures atmospheric carbon, promotes biodiversity by creating new habitat, frees up scarce fresh water supplies for other uses and can potentially reduce the impact of sea level rise on [coastal communities](#), in addition to producing solid biomass for energy and liquid biofuels.

"The paradigm for energy supply is shifting," said [Jennifer Holmgren](#), vice president and general manager of renewable energy and chemicals for Honeywell's UOP, in a statement. "To meet the growing demand for energy worldwide, we must identify regional biofuel solutions that are not only sustainable, but can actually regenerate the ecosystems where they are produced."

[Jim Albaugh](#), CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes, stressed the future value of plant-based fuels. "We are forging our energy future by developing a renewable fuel supply now, not when fossil fuels are depleted," he said. "Developing and commercializing these low-carbon energy sources is the right thing for our industry, for our customers and for future generations."

[Etihad Airways](#), the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, will also partner on the project.

The technology being demonstrated through the project was developed by Carl Hodges, who now leads [Global Seawater Inc.](#) and will contribute to the project as a special adviser.

The major commercial partners did not disclose their financial commitments for the project.