

# Honda says to open bio-ethanol research centre

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The corporate logo for the Honda Motor Co. The Japanese company seeking a boost in the race to build greener automobiles, said Thursday it would open a research centre to develop and produce bio-ethanol fuel from non-edible plant matter.

Japan's Honda Motor Co., seeking a boost in the race to build greener automobiles, said Thursday it would open a research centre to develop and produce bio-ethanol fuel from non-edible plant matter.

Japan's second-largest carmaker said it aims to start building the facility in Chiba prefecture near Tokyo in April and begin operations in November.

Bio-ethanol is a plant-derived fuel source that produces very little carbon-dioxide. Its supply is limited as it is primarily produced from sugar and

corn -- staple foods for people.

Honda wants to study whether it is viable to produce bio-ethanol from non-edible plant matter.

The automaker has already succeeded in producing the basic technology to extract ethanol fuel from cellulose, found in the fibrous part of plants, including inedible leaves and the stalks of plants.

Honda is striving to be an industry leader in eco-friendly cars, with its Civic hybrid proving a success alongside rival Toyota Motor Corp's Prius.

Japanese automakers have vowed to keep up their development of fuel-efficient cars, despite a slump in sales due to the economic downturn.

Honda said last week that its president was stepping down in June to be replaced by a younger head who would pull the company through the crisis.

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