

Exxon to make alternative fuel from algae: report

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Green algae smothering beaches in east China's Shandong province. Oil giant Exxon Mobil plans to announce a \$600 million investment to produce liquid transportation fuel from algae, The New York Times has reported.

Oil giant Exxon Mobil plans to announce a 600-million-dollar investment to produce liquid transportation fuel from algae, The New York Times reported on Tuesday.

The effort by Exxon, whose chairman and CEO Rex Tillerson once derided ethanol as "moonshine," includes a partnership with the biotechnology company Synthetic Genomics.

A top Exxon research told the newspaper that the company has researched fuel alternatives for years.

"We literally looked at every option we could think of, with several key parameters in mind," said Emil Jacobs, vice president for research and development at Exxon's research and engineering unit.

"Scale was the first. For transportation fuels, if you can't see whether you can scale a technology up, then you have to question whether you need to be involved at all."

But Jacobs acknowledged that it would take at least five to 10 years before large-scale commercial plants could produce algae-based fuels.

Environmentalists struck a note of skepticism at the plans.

"Research is great, but we need to see new products in the market," Greenpeace research director Kert Davies told the Times.

"We've always said that major [oil](#) companies have to be involved. But the question is whether companies are simply paying lip service to something or whether they are putting their weight and power behind it."

[Algae](#), Exxon said, could produce over 2,000 gallons of [fuel](#) (7,570 liters) per acre (0.4 hectare) of production per year, compared to 650 gallons (2,460 liters) for palm trees and 450 gallons (1,703 liters) for sugar canes, while corn only yields 250 gallons (946 liters).

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