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Green VC Money Meets Clean Tech at GoingGreen Conference



There's nothing like Green to attract Green. In this case, the just concluded AlwaysOn Going Green 2008 Conference over in Marin attracted a slew of VC and Biz Dev money looking to invest their portfolios in green tech. The summit as a whole brought together serious money looking for innovative ideas but to say that all the ideas and companies behind them offered true green innovation and philosophies would be somewhat akin to out and out greenwashing.

Early conference sessions including the solar breakthrough panel discussed various solar advances such as the Mono-crystalline silicon solar cells yet to us dialogue seemed rather pat and lacked needed a jolt.

The abundant clean green water session got a little splashier and brought forth honest panel responses such as "The water industry is dysfunctional. Like a train wreck." To us it seemed appropriate with the water price gouging, privatization of water companies and the like that the panel compared the water policies of many companies to Pyongyang economics.

If the Agricultural Revolution discussion meant to deliver a shock and awe philosophy then they certainly did their job. From the outset the panel consisting of David Cope, President & CEO, Purfresh Inc., Michael Dowgert, EVP Marketing & Business Development, Netafim, Richard Hamilton, CEO, Ceres Inc., and Rengarajan Ramesh, General Manager, GE Water & Process Technologies managed to fill the discussion with ideas of Genetically Modified crops as sustainable. Not only that but they promoted GMOs and commodity crops as the saviors to our economic, energy and food shortage woes. Maybe we had stepped into a parallel universe? The panel basically wrote off the local-sustainable food buying trend as something not serious. They

discussed that there might be a way to buy Chilean grapes without herbicides, and even so did they simply forget about shipping those grapes 6000 miles or so? To keep the party rolling, Richard Hamilton uttered, "Sometimes you want to buy produce at a farmers market and other times at WalMart". That comment brought a slew of comments from the live chat room display including one that said, "Hamilton (Ceres) is scary."

What the heck are these guys making up this "Green" panel anyway? We might as well had four guys from Monsanto up there uttering the benefits of GMOs and how many benefits they bring farmers. Ceres and Mendel Biotechnology (part of the Next Generation Biofuel panel) who made the Going Green Top 100 companies mentioned their partnerships with, among others, Monsanto. Oops did someone not do their green due diligence homework? Maybe they could add Exxon-Mobil as a top 100 green company and have their CEO speak as a keynote for next years conference.