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Venture Capital Meets Green Technology at Going Green Conference



The smell of green permeated the air at the just concluded AlwaysOn Going Green 2008 conference but in this case the green represented all the VC and biz dev money floating around the conference. Not that great green ideas and discussion didn't emanate from the various panels but this crowd certainly didn't bring out much tree hugger sentiment.

The early sessions including the solar breakthrough panel talked about various advances with items such as the Mono-crystalline silicon solar cells yet the dialogue seemed rather staged and lacked energy. The abundant clean green water session provided a more interesting discussion with some honest quips such as "The water industry is dysfunctional. Like a train wreck." The also suggested that many water companies use Pyongyang economics, which with all the worldwide water riots and price gouging makes one thing that this water situation will only continue.

The Agricultural Revolution discussion shocked us more than anything. 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 and commodity crops as the saviors to our economic, energy and food shortage woes. Whoa. We thought we walked into the wrong conference! 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 with herbicides and 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 chatter who wrote, "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 much benefit they bring farmers. Ceres and Mendel Biotechnology who made the Going Green Top 100 companies have investors/partnerships with, among others, Monsanto. Oops did someone not do their green due diligence homework? Maybe they could add Exxon-Mobil as a top green company for next years conference.