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Putting In a Good Word for Algae

By *JAMES KANTER*

A European lobbying group weighed in Tuesday on a fierce debate over the environmental value of using algae to produce [biofuels](#) for vehicles.

The group, the European Algae Biomass Association, said members of its scientific committee were “confident that the commercial production of algae biofuels can be achieved with a positive carbon footprint and will represent a further important step in the direction of reducing CO2 emission in European transport, including aviation.”

The association also said a consortium called [Aquafuels](#) would deliver a report in the coming months offering a “sound scientific assessment of algae-based biofuels in terms of both their expected sustainability and increased carbon efficiency.”

The Brussels-based association said its scientific committee included experts from major universities and scientists in the field of algae biomass.

Proponents claim that algae, like some crops grown for fuel, would reduce emission because it absorbs carbon dioxide while it grows. They want algae-based fuels eventually to qualify for use toward volume-based targets for using biofuels in the [European Union](#).

There is currently no algae-based biofuel commercially available in Europe.

Opponents say the benefits of using algae are unproved. They point to a recent study showing that the need for additives, in particular fertilizer, would give algae an unfavorable carbon footprint.

The United States government in January handed out more than \$80 million in stimulus money for biofuels research, much of which will be focused on algae research.