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Spartanburg-Based Companies Go Green

Partnership Will Create Jobs, Company Says

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SPARTANBURG, S.C. -- A couple of Spartanburg companies are reinventing themselves to be a leaders in the "green" energy field.

Kusters Zima Corp. was originally created to make machines for the textile industry. Now, it's building machines to turn biomass into renewable energy.

Agri-Tech Producers uses the machines to turn wood chips and mulch into a renewable fuel via a process called "torrefacation."

"This is a clean, renewable, sustainable fuel that will help South Carolina -- both from an economic standpoint and improve our environment," Agri-Tech Producers president Joseph James said.

The company said that a third of each tree cut for timber is not used. Instead of letting it go to waste, Agri-Tech uses it for biomass.

"It makes it dry and brittle and easier to use as a fuel in our utilities and for other coal users," James said.

The Spartanburg-based Kusters Zima Corp. was selected to make the machines to convert the chips into fuel by Agri-Tech.

"We need to increase our staff, we need to increase our engineering capacity," manager Gunter Noll said.

This new product line won't just mean keeping jobs, but adding about 50 more over time.

U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis applauded the two companies' partnership.

"If we make a commitment as a country to create a new energy future, we can create an awful lot of jobs," Inglis said.

Agri-Tech officials said there is already a waiting list for these machines that Kusters Zima has been contracted to produce. They hope to have them available for purchase within a year.

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