

Fast-Growing Plant to Fuel Alternative Energy

By Melissa Stiers

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ATLANTA — It just got easier for farmers and landowners to join the green energy movement. An extremely fast growing plant raised for biofuel has just hit the market via one Georgia company.



(photo courtesy of Tony Akin)

Freedom Giant Miscanthus is a variety of a large grassy plant also known as elephant grass. Researchers have been perfecting it in the lab for over a decade to make a lot of biomass in a little space.

"The yield is so high that it's going to be a truly renewable product," says Phillip Jennings, CEO of Sunbelt Biofuels--the only company with the rights to sell this particular variety."

Jennings compares the grass to a traditional source of biomass... trees.

"Trees are a wonderful renewable, but they're renewable over a cycle of 16-20 years," says Jennings. "We're talking Freedom Giant Miscanthus that is renewable every year with a yield of 20-30 tons per year."

The grass feeds biomass plants that make electricity and cellulosic ethanol plants that make fuel.

Jennings says farmers could sell the miscanthus to existing plants in the state and to the several others expected to come on line in the next few years.

He says it takes three years to get the maximum yield from the grass, so if farmers plant now they'll be ready when the demand increases.

