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Experts discuss energy sources

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FLORENCE — Biofuel experts gathered Thursday at the Pee Dee Research Center in Florence to discuss the possibilities of using switchgrass, which is native to South Carolina, as a potential energy source.

Dr. Jim Frederick, crop production and physiologist at Clemson University, is the coordinator of the research team that is using switchgrass to create energy. Frederick said interest in biofuels made it possible for the center to hold such a conference.

"It's one avenue just to get everyone together and to form more partnerships and collaborations," he said. "Also, it's a means for us to announce a little bit about what the South Carolina switchgrass program is all about."

Since switchgrass is native to the state, Frederick said it was an ideal choice for a biofuel.

"It can be used for two purposes — one, to make ethanol to go in our cars; two, it can be burned along with coal to generate power in our electrical plants," he said. "The good thing about it being a native (crop) is it's not going to turn into a kudzu."

Frederick said he thinks the future of biofuels will focus on each region producing biofuels based on the materials most readily available in that region, such as switchgrass in the South and corn in the Midwest.

State Rep. Terry Alexander of District 59 said he attended the conference to learn more about the project taking place in his district.

"I wanted to know and hear more about the switchgrass project," he said. "I

See SWITCHGRASS, 8A



STAFF/JOHN D. RUSSELL

Rep. Ben Hagood, who is a member of the Governor's Advisory Board on Climate, Energy and Commerce, addresses those gathered Thursday during the Switchgrass Energy for the Future conference at Clemson Pee Dee Research and Education Center.

SWITCHGRASS

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think it's something that we need to continue to investigate and research. It's kind of



Alexander

dustry.

"This is another alternative that we need to investi-

gate to see if we can make that transition into some type of energy," Alexander said. "I think that's what this is all about, not saying this is it. This is one of the many its as an alternative to energies."

Laurie Lawson, assistant to the vice president of agriculture at Clemson University, said he attended the conference to support Clemson's efforts to educate local farmers about alternative crops.

"We have to do something about our fuel system," he said. "We are smart enough in our country to develop things that will be better or just as good as oil. I think it is important that we do it right away."