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LS9 TOUTS DROP-IN FUEL, PLANS FOR COMMERCIALIZATION

Earlier this week, biotechnology company LS9 Inc. and Chevron Technology Ventures, a division of Chevron U.S.A. Inc., announced the beginning of the second phase of research to produce specific pure hydrocarbon products. The first stage involved the initial testing and evaluation of LS9's technology solution, according to the company.

Ed Dineen, president and CEO of LS9, further confirmed to OPIS that the company is continuing its focus on using synthetic biology to construct drop-in chemicals and fuels and will continue partnerships with Chevron and Proctor & Gamble.

"In the fuel space we are working on a number of diesel products," said Dineen. "We have entered into this next phase of development with Chevron. They have provided additional funding and we will be working with them over the next year or so."

The research partnership with Chevron is ongoing and productive, said Dineen. "We would hope to progress the technology to a sufficient stage where with some additional effort with Chevron and others we can bring the technology to the commercial stage, and make it available to Chevron and others to use it to produce hydrocarbon diesel."

With Chevron, Dineen predicts the next development phase would begin mid-year 2012 and "[potentially] with success there, we would look at commercialization within a couple of years."

LS9, which already has a main lab and pilot plant in San Francisco, is currently in the process of starting up a facility in Okeechobee, Fla., that will ultimately offer commercial scale capabilities, according to Dineen.

On the chemical end, the company has collaborated with Proctor & Gamble for two programs to "produce a specific chemical that they want to use to replace chemicals they are sourcing from petroleum based processes so they would have a sustainable renewable product," Dineen told OPIS.

"I think there is obviously a lot of activity in this bioproducts and biofuels space," said Dineen. "I think what is distinguishable about our company is the ability to make all these products directly through the synthetic biology. Our claim to fame is we can avoid [multiple step processes] through the pathway development that we have with synthetic biology," he said.

"We believe [our product] is going to be inherently cheaper, in terms of operating cost and capital, safer and more environmentally friendly," Dineen added.

A result of the growth process, Dineen said the company has plans to formally drop its trademarked "Renewable Petroleum Company" label because it didn't do the company's work justice.

"That would imply we are making a petroleum product that we are selling to refiners. We are making finished products. Our mantra is going to be sustainable products through the power of the micro biology and synthetic biology," Dineen added.

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