

Kiwi connection to green racing car

Scientists at Plant & Food Research in New Zealand had a part in developing the world's first racing car from sustainable and renewable resources.

Along with Blenheim-based company, Potatopak, the scientists made wing mirrors from potato starch for the Formula 3 vehicle that is made entirely from recycled or renewable materials.

The project is part of the Biopolymer Network that is owned jointly by Plant & Food Research, Scion and AgResearch and led by Plant & Food Research biomaterials engineer, Nick Tucker.

Dr Tucker says the opportunity came along when he was speaking at an international sustainable materials conference in England about his work on potato starch. A researcher from Warwick University spoke to Dr Tucker about a project to show that having fun, going fast and that excitement can be achieved in an environmentally conscious way. A racing enthusiast, Dr Tucker found it too good an opportunity to pass up.

Dr Tucker and his team was already working with Potatopak to improve water resistance in their biodegradable plates and cups and realised that the potato starch material they were working with - which is mouldable, and with a water proof coating is durable - would be good for the job.

Potatopak Chief Executive Richard Williams says that the racing car project has similar objectives to his business in looking after the planet and its natural resources. "While it was a separate project, we recognise the innovation and impetus in developing design is of mutual benefit," says Mr Williams.

The New Zealand scientists were assigned the wing-mirrors and have received positive feedback for the potato starch fairings around glass mirrors. These weigh significantly less than standard wing-mirrors and recently the Plant & Food Research scientists were invited to provide a second, improved version.

The Formula 3 vehicle developed largely by a team at Warwick University is not eligible to race in the international series as it features so much new technology but it will appear at race meetings around the world in demonstration laps showing off its sustainable technology.

The green car is fuelled by a biodiesel (chocolate oil) and its materials are made from potatoes, carrots and soyabeans and recycled materials like carbon-fibre, steel and glass.

For more information

Potatopak.com

www.worldfirstracing.co.uk

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/8034369.stm

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