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Algae Bioenergy State of Technology Review

Even though algae remain an attractive target for bioenergy applications over the longer term because of their high photosynthetic efficiency, the near-term prospects for primary algae-based energy/fuels production are poor due to the relatively high cost of cultivating and harvesting algae. The past 6 years have nonetheless seen substantial progress in research, development and demonstration of algae-based bioenergy and bio-products. With low fossil fuel prices, the algae-based industry is increasingly focusing on manufacturing higher value (non-fuel/energy) products that can be profitable today. Algal biomass-based co-products can provide the critically needed revenue to reduce the net cost of producing algal-based biofuels. As such, a biorefinery approach appears essential to realize the full value of algal biomass. Progress in minimizing/reducing the energy, water, nutrients and land use footprints of integrated algal-based operations needs to be a primary objective of larger scale demonstrations and future research and development.

Source: IEA Bioenergy
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