

# Florida Crystals' green program a sweet deal

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Since 1995, West Palm Beach-based Florida Crystals Corp. has been operating the largest biomass-to-electricity facility in North America, the Okeelanta Co-Generation Plant next to its sugar mill and refinery plant south of South Bay.

The plant uses 850,000 tons of sugar cane residue known as bagasse and 900,000 tons of clean wood material from construction and yard wastes to produce 140 net megawatts of electricity each year. The power is sold to Florida Power & Light Co. to provide electricity to 58,000 homes, said Florida Crystals spokesman Gaston Cantens.

As part of its internal green program, steam produced by the plant also powers the sugar mill and refinery.

In addition to producing a home-grown, renewable fuel, the plant is also saving 3.6 million cubic yards of landfill space by recycling the waste products purchased from more than 35 public and private recyclers.

The electricity delivered to the grid displaces the equivalent of more than 1 million barrels of oil each and displaces 240,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> each year.

The sale of the renewable electricity generates Renewable Energy Certifications that can be sold or used to certify the company's sugar as "carbon free."

"We produce the only certified carbon-free sugar in the world as a result of our operations," Cantens said.

The company's Okeelanta facility is also the site of a University of Florida demonstration ethanol plant expected to break ground this year.

- *Susan Salisbury*