

Naturally Advanced to grow flax in Willamette Valley

By Christina Williams
Sustainable Business Oregon



Naturally Advanced is looking to expand its Oregon operations and start sourcing flax in the Willamette Valley

Naturally Advanced Technologies Inc. said Thursday it will look to source flax in the Willamette Valley to keep up with demand for its CRAiLAR fiber, a sustainably developed alternative to cotton.

Lake Oswego-based Naturally Advanced also announced Thursday a partnership with Target, it's first retail partnership.

Ken Barker, the former Adidas executive who leads Naturally Advanced, said that flax was a common crop in the Willamette Valley around the time in World War II.

"The Willamette Valley was a very prolific producer of flax," Barker said. "We want to contract with growers who could grow it as a rotation crop for grass seed."

If Naturally Advanced is successful in finding Oregon growers it would develop a processing facility here to augment its current manufacturing operations in South Carolina.

Naturally Advanced, which also has partnerships with HanesBrands, Georgia-Pacific, Levi Strauss & Company, Carhartt and others, currently operates a pilot fiber manufacturing facility that produces 40,000 pounds per week of CRAiLAR. By the second quarter of next year, the company expects to have a full-scale production facility up and running with the capacity of 600,000 pounds per week.

Currently, Naturally Advanced's CEO, marketing, branding, investor relations and public relations are based in Lake Oswego.

Barker said expanding into some flax sourcing and processing in Oregon is attractive for its West Coast location.

"It's a perfect springboard for Asia," Barker said.

Naturally Advanced, which originally focused on making material-grade fiber out of hemp, started working with flax last year.

The company, which also has operations in Vancouver, B.C., netted \$13.5 million in a share sale this June.

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